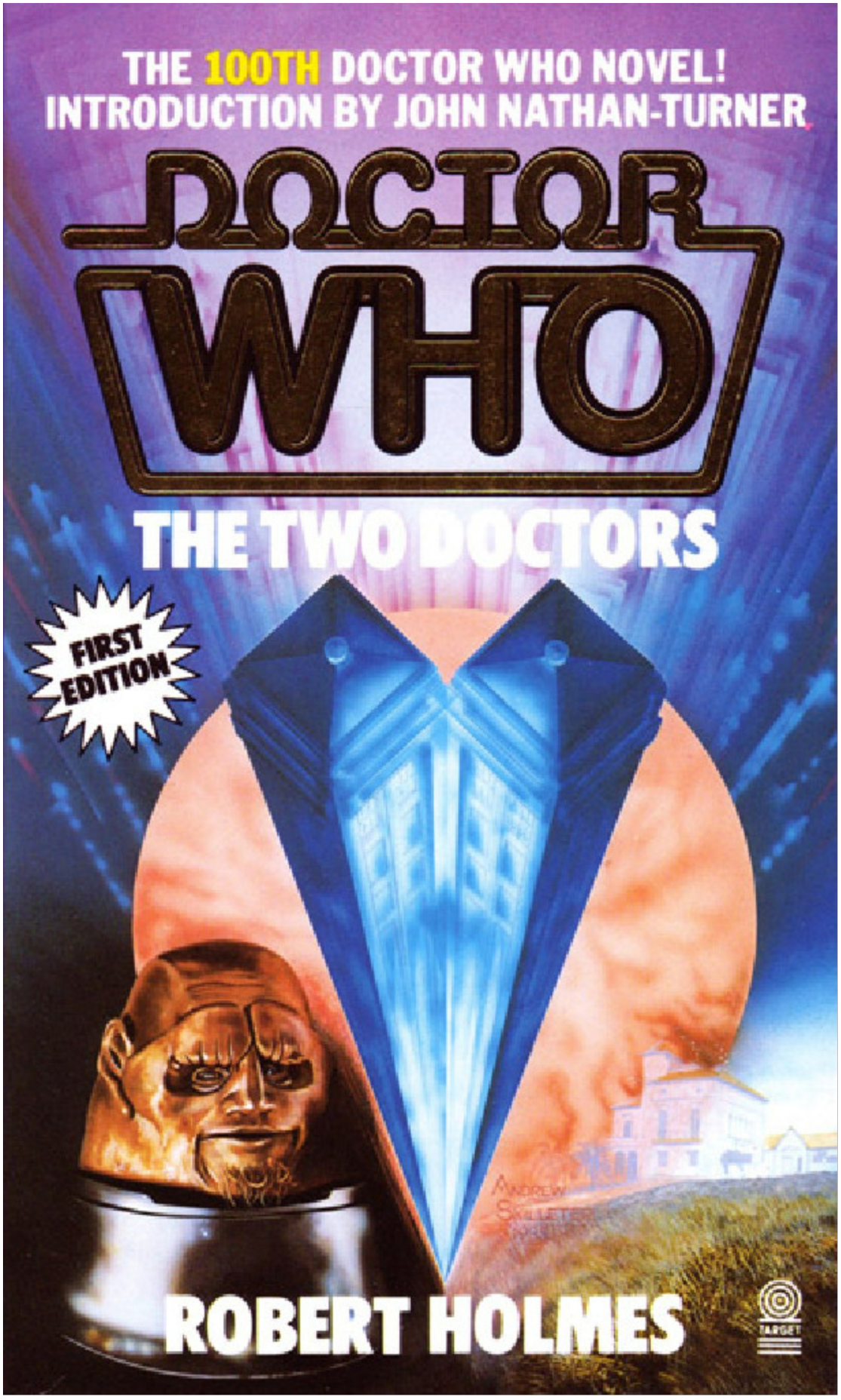
THE 100TH DOCTOR WHO NOVEL!
INTRODUCTION BY JOHN NATHAN-TURNER
DOCTOR WHO
THE TWO DOCTORS
FIRST EDITION
ROBERT HOLMES
TARGET

Disturbed by the time travel experiments of the evil Dastari and Chessene, the Time Lords send the second Doctor and Jamie to

investigate. Arriving on a station in deep space, they are attacked by a shock force of Sontarans and the Doctor is left for dead.

Across the gulfs of time and space, the sixth Doctor discovers that his former incarnation is very much alive. Together with Peri and Jamie he must rescue his other self before the plans of Dastari and Chessene reach their deadly and shocking conclusion . . .

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THE TWO DOCTORS

Based on the BBC television programme by Terrance Dicks by arrangement with the British Broadcasting Corporation

# Robert Holmes

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To celebrate the tenth Anniversary of *Doctor Who*, BBC Television presented a special story called 'The Three Doctors' starring Messrs Hartnell, Troughton and Pertwee.

Ten years later saw the feature-length celebration, 'The Five Doctors', featuring Peter Davison, Patrick Troughton, Richard Hurndall, Jon Pertwee, Tom Baker and William Hartnell. When I recently invited Patrick Troughton to join Colin Baker, the current incarnation of the travelling Time Lord, for a story entitled 'The Two Doctors', there was no special anniversary in mind. Therefore what better than this story being chosen as the one-hundredth *Doctor Who* novelisation?

Since 1973, Target and W. H. Allen have regularly issued ever-increasingly popular versions of the stories from the twenty-two year old series, and how delightful that Robert Holmes has finally been persuaded to novelise one of his own scripts. Bob's honest and witty version is a delight, his embellishments on the original fascinating –

especially 'the Teddy'. Here's to the next hundred titles.

Stay tuned!

John Nathan-Turner, Producer of *Doctor Who* **1**

# Countdown to Death

Space Station J7 defied all sense of what was structurally possible. Its architneers, revelling in the freedom of zero gravity, had created an ethereal tracery of loops and whorls and cusps that formed a constantly changing pattern as the station rotated slowly upon its axis. At one moment it looked like a giant, three-dimensional thumbprint; in the next perspective it resembled a cheap knuckleduster that had been used by Godzilla.

White radiance, blazing from its myriad ports and docking bays, rendered almost invisible the faint pin-points of light marking the distant civilisations that had created Station J7 – the nine planets of the Third Zone.

They studied it on the vid-screen, the Doctor and Jamie McCrimmon, and even the Doctor looked impressed. But while he was identifying tempered opaline, laminated epoxy graphite, and an interesting use of fused titanium carbide, the young Scot sought for a comparison from his own eighteenth-century background: twenty castles in the sky, he decided. And yet hadn't the Doctor said...

'Just a wee laboratory, eh?'

'Obviously it's grown,' said the Doctor curtly.

Wiping his hands on his ill-fitting tailcoat, he turned back to the console and again began fiddling with the vitreous dome that projected from the instrument deck.

That, Jamie knew, was the cause of his ill-temper. He had flown into a rage the moment he had seen it. The device – a teleport control, he called it – had not been there before... before when?

Jamie struggled to remember. They had been in a strange kind of garden where the grass was purple and there were flowers as tall as small trees. And although sunlight streamed into the garden, somehow there had been a dense wall of mist all around it. Then three men, tall, wearing yellow cloaks with high collars, appeared out of the mist. The Doctor had bowed deferentially so they had obviously been chieftains. After that... nothing. Jamie guessed they had placed some kind of magic spell on him because the next thing he could recall was returning to the TARDIS with the Doctor as cheerful as he had ever known him.

'If I make a success of this mission, my boy,' he said, 'it could mark the turning point in my relations with the High Council.'

Then he had found the teleport control and exploded with rage.

'Of all the infernal, meddling cheek! Don't they trust me?' he fumed. 'Do the benighted idiots think I'm incapable of flying a TARDIS solo?'

He had ranted on in this fashion for several minutes and, since then, had spent his time sulking and trying to detach the offending device. It gave the Time Lords, he explained, dual-control over the TARDIS.

Privately – although he was careful to say nothing –

Jamie thought that dual-control might not be such a bad thing. On his own the Doctor never seemed able to get the craft to where he said they were going.

A snort of frustration, rather louder than usual, came now from the direction of the control console. Jamie glanced round to see the Doctor shaking his head.

'Unbelievable!' he said. 'Do you know what they've done, Jamie? They've set up a twin symbiotic link to the central diaphragm!'

‘A symbiotic link, eh?’ said Jamie. ‘Aye, well, I guessed it would be something like that.’

The Doctor shot him a suspicious look but Jamie’s expression was all innocence. ‘Anyway, it would take days to unravel,’ he said, ‘and I can’t spare the time.’ He turned back to the console and adjusted the controls.

Jamie felt the familiar slight shudder in the deck of the TARDIS. ‘Why have we dematerialised? I thought we were going in.’

‘We are, Jamie.’ The Doctor gave the minutest tweak to the vector switch. ‘It’s simply that I don’t want them to spot us on their detection beams.’

‘Why not? I thought you said they were friendly?’

‘Friendly? They’ll probably be overpoweringly effusive!’

The Doctor grinned at the thought. ‘There are forty of the finest scientists in the universe working here on pure research, Jamie, and I don’t want to distract them. Think of the commotion with them all clamouring around wanting my autograph.’

‘I hadn’t thought of that,’ Jamie said dryly.

‘I’m just going to have a quiet word in private with old Dastari, the Head of Projects.’ The TARDIS gave another slight lurch and the Doctor beamed. He seemed to have recovered his good humour. ‘Splendid!’ he said, switching off the main drive. ‘We’ve hit conterminous time again.’

He opened a panel on the side of the translucent dome and took out a small, black object shaped something like a stickpin. ‘The recall button,’ he said, noting Jamie’s look.

‘As they’ve gone to so much trouble I suppose we’d better take it.’

He started towards the door, then stopped. ‘One last thing, Jamie – don’t go wandering off. Stay close to me but just let me do the talking.’

‘You usually do,’ said Jamie quietly.

The Doctor appeared not to hear. ‘This is going to be a delicate business,’ he said, ‘demanding considerable tact and charm. All you have to do is stand quietly in the background and admire my diplomatic skills. Understood?

Right, come along.’

They stepped from the TARDIS into a dazzling purplish light that left Jamie blinking. At the same time his nostrils were assailed by the heavy, slightly nauseating smell of raw meat and, as his eyes adjusted to the glare, he saw that they had materialised within the kitchens of the space station.

Before he could take in anything further he heard an angry roar and turned to see a huge alien lumbering towards them. Jamie tensed for flight but then noticed that the Doctor, standing beside him, seemed totally unconcerned.

‘How dare you transmat that – that object into my kitchens!’ the creature bellowed.

‘And how dare you have the impertinence to address me like that!’ said the Doctor coolly.

The alien raised a threatening arm and Jamie saw there was a meat cleaver clutched in the vast paw. ‘I am Shockeye o’ the Quawncing Grig!’

The voice boomed like thunder, heavy with menace, but the Doctor merely shrugged. ‘I’m not interested in the pedigree of an Androgum,’ he said. ‘I am a Time Lord.’

Jamie was astonished at the effect this had on the Androgum. He stepped back and attempted a smile that was almost servile.

‘Oh... I should have realised. My humblest apologies, Lord.’

Then the porcine eyes turned to Jamie, studying him with curiosity and something like greed. Jamie stared back defiantly, thinking the Androgum was one of the ugliest aliens he had ever encountered.

Shockeye’s sparse thatch of ginger hair topped a heavily-boned face that sloped down into his body without any apparent necessity for a neck. His skin was grey and rugose, thickly blotched with the warty excrescences common to denizens of high-radiation planets. But it was not the face, nor the expression on it, that caused the back of Jamie’s neck to tingle: it was the sheer brute power packed into the massive body. Every line of it, from the mastodon shoulders and over the gross belly to the tree-trunk legs, spoke of a frightening physical strength.

Jamie became aware that Shockeye was enquiring now about him. ‘He is from the planet Earth,’ the Doctor said.

‘A human.’

‘Ah, a Tellurian! I have not seen one of these before.’

Shockeye’s covetous gaze returned again to Jamie. ‘Is it a gift for Dastari?’

‘A gift?’

‘Such a soft white skin, Lord, whispering of a tender succulence. But Dastari will not appreciate its quality. He has no sensual refinement. Let me buy it from you.’

The Doctor glared. ‘My companion is not for sale,’ he said.

‘I promise you, Lord,’ – and Shockeye paused to wipe away the saliva dripping from his lips – ‘I promise there is no chef in the nine planets who would do more to bring out the flavour of the beast.’

‘Just get on with your butchery!’ the Doctor snapped.

Placing a protective hand on Jamie’s shoulder he steered him quickly from the kitchen out into the central walkway.

Rather late, the gist of what had been said was percolating into Jamie’s numbed mind. The Androgum had wanted to buy him for the table, like an ox at market.

His stomach twitched with nausea at the thought.

The Doctor glanced at him with a half-smile. ‘Don’t worry, Jamie. Androgums will eat anything that moves.’

‘I thought you said they were all great scientists here?’

‘Not the Androgums. They’re the servitors – they do all the station maintenance.’

‘So Shockeye’s a scullion, is he?’

‘With a fine opinion of himself, of course. Chefs usually have.’ The Doctor paused to study a glowing direction screen. Suddenly, Jamie heard the unmistakable sound of the TARDIS dematerialising.

‘Doctor, listen!’

The Doctor nodded. ‘The teleport control. The Time Lords really are taking these people seriously, aren’t they?

This way, my boy.’

He set off briskly along the walkway. Jamie gave a helpless shrug and hurried after him. The Doctor was clearly undisturbed by the loss of the TARDIS – ‘nae fashed’ was the way Jamie expressed it to himself – so it was perhaps not as serious as he had thought.

Behind them, in the kitchen, however, one person was taking the disappearance of the TARDIS seriously.

Chessene, the station chatelaine, stared at the spot where the TARDIS had stood a few seconds earlier.

'Our allies won't care for that,' she said. 'I'd promised the Group Marshal he could have the Time Lord's machine.'

Shockeye glanced up briefly. He was scooping the soft core from a huge marrow bone. 'Will it make any difference, madam?'

Chessene shook her head. 'Not to me. But it shows the Gallifreyans are suspicious, so I was right to lay the plans I did.'

Although she was herself an Androgum, the chatelaine shared few of Shockeye's racial characteristics. In her, the heavy brow-ridge and jawline were modified so that the face was strong but handsome. Her tall, erect body was gowned in a dark, fustian material touched with silver at the collar and cuffs and around her waist she wore a silver cord from which dangled a bunch of electronic passkeys.

Altogether she was an imposing figure but it was her eyes, dark and deep-set but shining with a luminous intelligence, that were her most striking feature; there were times when even Shockeye could scarcely bear the intensity of that burning gaze that seemed to bore deep into his skull as though ferreting out his every thought.

He busied himself spreading the bone marrow thickly along a flank of meat. 'So now we wait,' he said.

'Not for long,' Chessene said. 'Stike is moving.'

Shockeye glanced up in surprise. 'Already? The calgesic won't have affected them yet.'

'It will by the time his force arrives.'

'Did they enjoy the meal?'

'Dastari said you had surpassed yourself.'

'Being unable to taste it, madam, I worried that it might be over-seasoned.'

'Shockeye, their last supper would have added lustre to your reputation – except that they won't live to remember it.'

And Chessene smiled at the thought, baring square white teeth. It was a smile from which smoke might have issued: a smile from the mouth of Hell...

In Dastari's office the Doctor's face, too, bore a smile although his was a little forced. His old friend was giving him a hard time, apparently upset by the fact that his cherished space station had received no research funding from the Time Lords.

'But, Dastari, you can never have expected help from the Time Lords,' he said. 'Their policy is one of strict neutrality.'

Dastari shook his head sadly. It was a handsome head, the finely-drawn, ascetic features emphasised by iron-grey hair cut *en brosse*.

'Nonetheless, Doctor, there has been widespread disappointment among the other Third Zone governments.'

'Don't chide me, Dastari. I'm simply a messenger.

Officially, I'm here quite unofficially.'

Dastari raised a quizzical eyebrow. 'You'll explain that paradox, I'm sure.'

The Doctor nodded. 'I'm a pariah, outlawed from Time Lord society. So that they can always deny that they sent me.'

'And why have they sent you?'

The Doctor leaned over Dastari's carved wooden desk.

‘Because they have been monitoring the experiments in time travel of Professors Kartz and Reimer. They want them stopped.’

‘And how do the Time Lords equate that with a policy of complete neutrality?’ Dastari asked sardonically.

‘As I said, they can always deny sending me.’

Dastari smiled thinly. ‘Casuistry and hypocrisy.’

Despite the smile, Jamie McCrimmon – standing mutely in the background as instructed – sensed that the old professor was now boiling with anger. He had seen men smile in just that way as their hands went to their swords.

Suddenly a buzzer sounded in the room, breaking the tension, and the walkway panel slid back. Jamie looked round to see a tall lassie in a long, dark dress on the threshold. Her bold eyes swept over him and then fastened on the Doctor, studying him with a curious intensity.

‘Yes, Chessene?’ said Dastari.

Chessene’s long lashes swept down, masking that disturbing stare. ‘I wondered if your guests require refreshments, Professor?’

‘Aye, well –’ said Jamie eagerly before the Doctor cut him short.

‘Thank you,’ he said, ‘but we’ve already eaten.’

‘That was yesterday!’ Jamie protested.

The Doctor looked at him in a way that brooked no argument. ‘One meal a day is entirely adequate,’ he said.

Dastari nodded dismissively. ‘Thank you, Chessene.’

‘Very good, Professor.’ Chessene bobbed her head and went out. The wall-panel closed behind her. Dastari turned back to the Doctor, using the interruption as an opportunity to change the subject.

‘Well, Doctor, what did you make of our chatelaine?’ he asked.

‘Is she an Androgum?’

‘She was,’ Dastari said. ‘Now she is an Androgum-T.A.

Technologically augmented.’

The Doctor frowned. ‘I see. One of your biological experiments.’ His voice was disapproving.

‘I’ve carried out nine augmentations on Chessene. She’s now at mega-genius level. I’m very proud of her.’

‘Proud of her, or your own skills?’

Dastari shrugged. ‘Perhaps a little of both,’ he admitted.

‘But all that ferocious Androgum energy is now functioning on a higher level. She spends days in the data banks simply sucking in knowledge.’

‘She remains an Androgum, Dastari. Even you can’t change nature.’

‘In Chessene’s case I believe I have.’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘Dangerous ground, Dastari. Give an ape control of its environment and it will fill the world with bananas.’

Dastari stifled a yawn. ‘Really, Doctor!’ he said tiredly.

‘I expected something more progressive from you. Don’t you understand the tremendous implications of my work?’

‘That’s why I say it’s dangerous.’

Dastari pinched the bridge of his nose between finger and thumb, as though trying to keep awake. He said, 'We of the nine planets have become old and effete. Our seed is thin. We must pass the baton of progress to others. If I can raise the Androgums to a higher plane there is no limit to what their boiling energy might achieve.'

The Doctor sighed. Scientists, no matter how brilliant in their field, so often suffered from a kind of tunnel vision that stopped them seeing into the next field. Obsessed with short-term objectives they developed a mental astigmatism towards the possible far-reaching consequences of their work.

He said, 'Dastari, I've no doubt you could augment an insect to a point where it understood nuclear physics. It would still not be a sensible thing to do.'

This time Dastari yawned openly. 'Perhaps we should agree to differ, Doctor. Let's return to the purpose of your visit here.'

While the Doctor and Dastari were having this argument, the cause of it, Chessene, was making her way down to the station's control centre where the Duty Watcher was fighting an overwhelming drowsiness.

Watching the six observation screens that normally showed nothing but the black emptiness of space was an eye-glazing job. Duty Watchers often dozed off during a shift. To combat this there was a brain-scanning device attached to the Watcher's chair. Now, as his head began to nod forward, the monitor detected the change in his brain pattern as it sank into the slower rhythms of sleep.

Instantly it shrilled a warning that jerked the Watcher back to alertness.

He muttered an imprecation and reached for one of the green drenalix tablets on the console. And then he had no need of it. An arrow-flight of five spaceships was suddenly blipping across the left-hand screen, flashing in towards the station. The formation looked hostile.

The Watcher touched his computer panel. 'Identify,' he ordered.

Chessene glided from the shadows behind him. She moved soundlessly but even without her stealth the Duty Watcher would not have heard her. His attention was fully concentrated on the observation screen.

'The approaching craft are Sontaran battle cruisers,' the computer said.

'Operate defence –' the Watcher broke off with a choked cry. His body arched in sudden agony and he fell forward across the console, his tongue protuding thickly, like a bursting plum, from a face already lividly cyanosed.

Chessene removed the gas-injector from the nape of the Watcher's neck. The computer hummed and whirred as though with impatience. 'Please complete your last instruction.'

'The last instruction is cancelled,' Chessene said.

'Maintain normal surveillance.'

'Normal surveillance,' the computer agreed.

'Open all docking bays.'

On the observation screen the blips marking the approaching Sontaran force were now appreciably stronger.

With a faint smile Chessene slipped the tiny gas-injector back into her reticule and turned to study her reflection in the long looking-glass set into one wall.

She flicked a hand through her cap of short, jet-black hair and tautened the long gown more tightly round the fullness of her hips, before making her way demurely

from the room. For all the expression on her face she might just have served tea in a presbytery.

Behind her the body of the Duty Watcher twitched grotesquely and then slumped to the floor as the krylon gas contracted its tissues and dissolved the bones. Chemically filleted, curled into a question mark, the remains of the Watcher looked very small, like those of a long-dead child.

## 2

# Massacre on J7

After that first display of simmering anger, Dastari had turned down his emotional thermostat. He sat stolidly now, politely but firmly refusing even to consider the Doctor's request that the time experiments be discontinued.

In vain, the Doctor pointed out that the Gallifreyan monitors had already detected movements of up to point four on the Bocca Scale. 'Anything much higher could threaten the whole fabric of time,' he said.

'Kartz and Reimer are well aware of the dangers, Doctor. They're responsible scientists.'

'They're irresponsible meddlers!' said the Doctor angrily.

Dastari sighed and shook his head sadly. 'Aren't you being a little ingenuous, Doctor?'

'What?'

'Hasn't it occurred to you that the Time Lords have a vested interest in insuring that others do not discover their secrets?'

It was a telling point. From the way that the Doctor's back stiffened, Jamie McCrimmon was sure it was something he had not previously considered. 'I'm absolutely certain that's not the High Council's motive,' he said defensively.

He didn't sound certain, however, and Dastari gave a knowing smile. 'I gather your own machine is no longer in the station,' he said. 'Could that be because the Time Lords didn't want Kartz and Reimer to examine it?'

The Doctor dodged the question. 'Look, I've a suggestion,' he said. 'Stop these experiments for the time being while my people study them. If Kartz and Reimer are really working on safe lines I'm sure they'll be allowed to continue.'

It was the wrong thing to say. Dastari's eyebrows rose an incredulous fraction. 'Allowed to continue?'

'I mean there would be no further objection,' the Doctor said.

'In the first place, Doctor, I have no authority to ask Kartz and Reimer to submit their work for analysis. And in the second place, the Time Lords have no right to make such a grossly unethical demand. I've never heard such unmitigated arrogance!'

'And I've never heard such specious claptrap!' the Doctor snapped back angrily. 'Don't prate to me about ethics! The balance of the space-time continuum could be destroyed by your ham-fisted numbskulls!'

Dastari's head sank forward as though with weariness. 'I don't feel there is anything to be gained by prolonging this discussion,' he said.

The Doctor smacked a hand on the desk. 'You have more letters after your name than anyone I know – enough for two alphabets. How is it you can be such a purblind, stubborn, irrational – and thoroughly objectionable – old idiot?'

Swinging round after this outburst of temper the Doctor noticed a grin on Jamie's face. 'And what are you simpering about, you hyperborean ninny?' he demanded.

'I was just admiring your diplomatic skills,' Jamie said.

'Pah!' retorted the Doctor cleverly and turned back to Dastari to launch a further tirade. But the old scientist was lying forward across his desk.

'He's got his heed doon,' said Jamie, 'and I canna say I blame him.'

'I'll thank you not to speak in that appalling mongrel dialect,' the Doctor said, shaking Dastari by the shoulder.

‘I mean he’s gone to sleep.’

The Doctor was studying Dastari closely. ‘He’s nae asleep – not asleep,’ he said. ‘He’s drugged!’

Jamie and the Doctor had no time to consider the implications of that discovery. Almost in the same moment they heard distant bursts of gunfire and incoherent cries of panic.

‘What’s that?’ Jamie said.

The Doctor shook his head sombrely. ‘I’d have thought a Jacobite would recognise that sound, Jamie. “The thunder of the Captains and the shouting...” ’ he said, quoting from the Book of Job.

He went towards the walkway panel but before he reached it the panel was flung open by a white-coated scientist.

‘Professor!’ he said. And then there was the staccato rattle of a machine carbine from the walkway and the scientist danced into the room in a grisly pirouette, the tiny rheon shells ripping open sagging red holes in his body as though the flesh concealed a dozen zip-fasteners.

He was dead before he hit the floor, before the Doctor was at the entrance staring out into the walkway, gaunt-faced at what he saw. ‘Run, Jamie!’ he called hoarsely.

Jamie hesitated. ‘Doctor –’

‘Run, I say! Save yourself!’ The Doctor waved towards a second servo-panel on the far side of the office. And though it ran contrary to the whole of Jamie’s fierce sense of manhood, he could but do as he was ordered.

In his last glance back he saw the Doctor, arms raised above his head, stubbornly refusing to give ground although the bulbous flash-eliminator of a rheoncarbine was pressing insistently against his rib-cage. Even then, as the panel closed behind him, he realised that the Doctor was playing for time to allow him his chance of escape.

He went not far, however, did Jamie McCrimmon.

Native instinct guided him through cross-shafts and shadowed subways and he was close at hand when the Things led the Doctor away. He trailed them then through the interminable corridors of the station, never visible yet never out of sight, using all the cunning gained in years of stalking deer among the crags of the Black Cuillins. And all the time, and all around, he could hear gunfire and piteous screams as the station’s inhabitants were hunted down and systematically massacred.

In the end they took the Doctor into a chamber where Jamie could not follow: one of the potato-heads stood guard by the door. Jamie turned back, down a wee sidealley, and climbed some coiling metal pipes to reach a grille set high in the wall from where he could see into the chamber.

The sight that met his eyes then was one he would never forget.

They had the Doctor trapped in a glass cylinder through which sharp bursts of electric-blue fire flickered. His mouth was open and he was retching and twisting in agony although no sound came through the heavy glass of the cylinder.

Jamie had no doubt that he was watching the death-throes of the Doctor, a death of the most violent and painful kind. Nobody could endure for long such intensity of torture. As he watched that well-loved face torn once again by a shuddering cry, slow tears made runnels down Jamie’s cheeks. His grip on the metal grille tightened until blood welled from under his fingernails and he swore, coldly and monotonously, terrible oaths of vengeance in a voice from which all passion was dredged.

He was still standing tip-toed on the conduit when Shockeye o' the Quawncing Grig entered the crossway.

Eyes agleam at this fortuitous reunion with the tasty Tellurian, Shockeye lowered the plastic hamper he was carrying and – silently for one of his ponderous bulk –

crept towards Jamie.

Something warned Jamie of the danger. He sprang down from the conduit to face the Androgum and the razor-sharp blade of his skein dhu was already glinting murderously in his hand. At that moment, he thought, he wanted very badly to kill someone and the fat cook would do for a start.

If Shockeye was surprised by the primitive's reaction, nothing showed on his face. He continued edging forward, remorseless as a wall of lava. 'Whoa, boy,' he said cajolingly. 'Easy there... Old Shockeye won't hurt you.'

Judging the range, he made a sudden grab for Jamie's knife-arm. The six-inch blade flashed and Shockeye jumped back, blood dripping from his wrist.

'Oh, we are wild, aren't we?' said Shockeye good-humouredly, easing forward again.

Jamie, bobbing and weaving, moved back. Taking on an opponent of Shockeye's size and strength within the confines of the narrow passage had been a miscalculation.

In a more open area he could have made better use of his speed and agility. Here, he was like a rat fighting a dog in a sack.

'Shockeye, why aren't you on the ship?'

The voice stopped Shockeye in his tracks. He turned to face Chessene. 'I was just collecting some provisions, madam,' he said, indicating the abandoned hamper.

'The ship is fully stocked.'

'But the standard rations are so boring.' Shockeye made a moue of displeasure. 'These are a few special things for the journey. A cold collation I prepared –'

Shockeye heard the scamper of feet behind him and turned to stare after the fleeing Jamie. 'The Tellurian's escaped,' he said regretfully.

'Stike will leave nothing alive here,' Chessene said.

'But such a waste, madam... Have you decided on our destination?'

'It's unimportant.'

'Earth?' Shockeye suggested eagerly.

Chessene shrugged. There was little about Earth in the data banks. The third planet in its system, unusually prolific in flora and fauna of which the Tellurians, or Humans, intelligent but primitive bipeds, were the dominant species. In general, she thought, it sounded a rather humdrum little planet of no particular interest and too far from the centre of things to hold any strategic value.

But its very remoteness would suit her purposes and she could certainly sell it to Group Marshal Stike as a convenient waystation on his journey to the Madillon Cluster...

'Very well,' she said. 'But why Earth?' It was a rhetorical question because, knowing Shockeye, she already knew the answer.

Shockeye licked his lips. 'I have a craving to taste one of these human beasts, madam. The meat looks so white and roundsomely layered on the bone – a sure sign of a tasty animal.'

Chessene smiled, almost with affection. 'You think of nothing but your stomach, Shockeye.'

‘The gratification of pleasure is the sole motive of action,’ said Shockeye, as though reciting a creed. ‘Is that not our law?’

‘I still accept it,’ Chessene said. ‘But there are pleasures other than the purely sensual.’

‘For you, perhaps. Fortunately, I have not been augmented.’

Briefly, Shockeye’s voice was tinged with contempt and Chessene stiffened, her dark eyes flashing dangerously.

‘Take care!’ she warned. ‘Your purity could easily become insufferable.’

Temporarily, at least, Shockeye stood his ground.

‘These days I notice you no longer use your karm name, do you – Chessene o’ the Franzine Grig?’

She took a step forward and he thought she was going to strike him. Then she controlled herself. ‘Do you think that for one moment I ever forget that I bear the sacred blood o’

the Franzine Grig?’ she demanded. ‘But that noble history lies behind me while ahead – ahead lies a vision!’

Shockeye gave a non-committal grunt and picked up the hamper. ‘I’ll load the provisions, madam,’ he said, and set off towards the docking bay where their Delta-Six nestled sleekly like a torpedo in its launching tube.

He knew all about Chessene’s vision, her belief that she was destined to carry the Androgums forward into a new chapter of high technology. To his mind such ‘progress’

led only to an existence that was both artificial and sterile.

Life was nothing without the pleasure-principle; enjoyment of the senses was everything.

Pushing the hamper into the craft’s loading chute, he thought that even Chessene would find his careful selection of succulent meats and choice viands infinitely more palatable than the standard spacefare of vitaminised protein concentrate.

While Shockeye settled himself in the spaceship’s cramped saloon, Chessene settled a few final details with the Sontaran leader, Group Marshal Stike. It was an edgy meeting.

Stike, as Chessene had thought, was furious at the loss of the TARDIS. Chessene argued that its very removal was irrefragable evidence that the Time Lords knew Kartz and Reimer had been on the right track. It showed a fear that their own monopoly of time travel was about to be broken.

Before they parted Stike summoned one of his aides, a Field Major named Varl, and told Chessene he would accompany her on the journey to Earth. Looking at him, she wondered briefly how the Sontarans told each other apart: except that the Group Marshal sported a little more gold braid on his shoulders, Varl was indistinguishable from his leader.

Chessene protested that Varl’s inclusion in her party showed a lack of trust on the part of the Sontarans before she reluctantly, with a display of bad grace, acceded to Stike’s demand. Privately, it was something she had been expecting and she was delighted to discover that Stike could be so easily second-guessed. But then, before selecting them as her allies, she had made an exhaustive and painstaking analysis of Sontaran psychology.

Leading Varl down to the Delta-Six docking bay, she congratulated herself that part one of her plan had worked perfectly. Part two would be accomplished on Earth. And Stike, she thought gloatingly, would never know about part three...

A nonillion and a half parsecs from Station J7 another Doctor – or, rather, the same Doctor but in a later incarnation – sat on a river bank with a young American girl called Peri. She had no idea where they were. The Doctor hadn't bothered to tell her. He had simply collected his fishing pole from one of the seemingly limitless storage cupboards that were in the TARDIS and rushed off down to the river. Except for the strangely brassy colour of the sky, Peri thought they might even have been on her home planet. In fact, she had seen skies that colour down in Kansas before a storm.

Peri decided she would welcome a storm right now. It might make the Doctor pack up and return to the TARDIS. He had been sitting there staring, as though mesmerised, at the bobbing tip of his stupid float-thing for absolutely hours. And there was no chance that he would ever catch anything – not in that gaudy pink and yellow coat and his stridently clashing trousers. She didn't know much about fishing but she had noticed that serious anglers wore muddy sorts of colours.

Idly, she flicked a pebble into the slow-moving river.

The Doctor glanced over at her. 'Don't do that,' he chided.

'You'll frighten the fish.'

'What fish?' Peri said scathingly. 'I'm bored.'

'Fishing requires patience, Peri. I think it was Rassilon who once said there are few ways in which a Time Lord can be more innocently employed than in catching fish.'

'Oh, Doctor, that's a whopper!'

'Where? I don't see it.'

'I mean it was Doctor Johnson who said that about money.'

The Doctor shrugged. 'What's the use of a good quotation if you can't change it?' he said smugly.

'Well, anyway, you're not innocently employed in catching fish, are you?'

'They're just lazy today,' said the Doctor. 'The last time I fished this particular stretch I landed four magnificent gumblejack in less than ten minutes.'

'Gumblejack?' said Peri.

The Doctor nodded. 'The finest fish in this galaxy –

probably in the universe. Cleaned and skinned and quickly pan-fried in their own juices until they're golden brown.

Ambrosia steeped in nectar, Peri! Their flavour is unforgettable.'

Peri stared at him curiously. It was the first time she had ever heard the Doctor discourse on the subject of food in that way; his enthusiasm was usually reserved for more arcane matters. She had known him talk for an hour about the life-cycle of a parasite found only in the boll-weevil's stomach.

The Doctor noticed her look and concealed a smile.

Little wonder that Peri had never heard of gumblejack for it was a name he had just invented. The truth was he had fancied a quiet day by the river and had made fishing his excuse. Just recently he had been experiencing a strange sense of unease; he was troubled by shadowy, half-formed fears and an inexplicable foreboding. There was no reason for it and a few hours just spent watching that calm flow of water might wash the mood away.

The day-glo green tip of his float suddenly dipped below the surface.

'I've got a bite!' he shouted, scrambling to his feet.

'At last,' said Peri.

The Doctor let the line run from his reel. 'Give him his head for a bit,' he said. 'You have to play these chaps carefully. Where's the creel?'

'You're standing on it,' Peri told him.

'Ah, yes... My word, this fellow's putting up a fight!' He reeled in some slack on the line. 'Now get ready with the gaff, Peri.'

'I'm not sticking that thing in a poor little fish!' Peri said indignantly.

'Not so little, Peri.' The Doctor gave a triumphant grin as he pulled his catch in towards the bank. 'Not so little at all. By the feel of it, this might be a record.'

A wriggling silver minnow, no more than two inches long, came into sight. 'Wow, Doctor!' Peri said, jumping with feigned excitement. 'That must weigh very nearly a whole ounce!'

The Doctor stared at her coldly. 'Did you see the one that got away?' he said. 'That enormous gumblejack trying to swallow this little fellow?'

Gently, he unhooked the minnow and restored it to the water. It floated for a moment, pale belly uppermost, and then it gave a flip of its tail and shot out into the river current. The Doctor sighed and straightened to his feet.

'Right, Peri, back to the TARDIS. We'll try our luck in the Great Lakes of Pandatorea,' he said.

Peri pulled a face. 'Must we?'

'You've never seen such fish,' he said, ignoring her interruption. 'And as for the Pandatorean conger – it's longer than your railway trains.'

'I don't think I wish to know,' said Peri. 'What is all this fishing stuff, anyway?'

The Doctor began packing away his tackle. 'It's restful,'

he said. 'Relaxing. I haven't felt at all myself lately.'

'I don't know which is yourself,' she said, only half-jokingly. She was thinking of that weird metamorphosis he had gone through so recently on Androzani Minor and how wildly volatile his nature seemed to have become since then.

He divined her meaning instantly and nodded emphatic agreement. 'Exactly. This regeneration doesn't seem to be one hundred per cent yet,' he said.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when he swayed drunkenly, clutching at his throat, and the colour drained from his face. Then his knees gave way and he pitched headlong to the ground.

**3**

# Tomb in Space

‘I think you fainted,’ Peri said.

Standing in the TARDIS console room, the Doctor shook his head and glared. ‘I never faint,’ he said firmly.

Peri decided not to argue. When he collapsed she had run to his side, fearing the worst, and found to her relief that his hearts were still pumping with that curious double-thump of bi-cardial vascular systems. But it had seemed an age – though it was probably only a minute or so – before he had regained consciousness and the blood had returned to his chalk-white face.

‘You should carry your celery,’ she said.

‘Celery, yes!’ The Doctor raised a hand to his head, staring at her intently but following some inward train of thought. ‘And the tensile strength of jelly babies. But I had a clarinet. Or was it a flute? It was something I blew into.’

Peri feared that he was going again. ‘Would you like a glass of water?’ she asked.

‘No, it was a recorder!’ He snapped his fingers in excitement. ‘That’s when I was! Some kind of mind-lock.’

‘You’re not making sense.’

‘I’m making perfect sense.’ He began pacing agitatedly round the TARDIS console. ‘I was being put to death!’

‘I think you should sit down,’ Peri said worriedly.

‘Sit down? The Sontarans are executing me! Except...’

he paused, lost in thought, rubbing his nose in a familiar perplexed gesture. ‘It wasn’t that way,’ he went on slowly.

‘It didn’t end like that. So it’s not possible.’

‘What isn’t possible?’

‘I exist. I am here. Now. Therefore I cannot have been killed. That is irrefutable logic, isn’t it?’ He looked at her in appeal.

‘Don’t worry about it,’ she said, trying to calm him.

He wagged a finger at her like a tutor trying to drum his point into the skull of an obtuse student. ‘And yet,’ he said,

‘the there and then subsumes the here and now, doesn’t it?

So if I was killed then I must only exist now as a temporal tautology. That also is irrefutable.’

‘Circular logic will only make you dizzy, Doctor.’

Peri thought that was rather clever but the Doctor took no notice. He began pacing the control room again, still thinking aloud. He said, ‘The most likely explanation is that I’ve not synchronised properly yet... I suffered some kind of time-slip in the subconscious.’

‘Perhaps you should see a doctor,’ Peri suggested.

‘Are you trying to be funny?’

‘It was just a thought.’

The Doctor checked his stride. ‘Come to think of it,’ he said. ‘Yes, perhaps...’

He rummaged in his pockets and pulled out a thick pack of visiting cards. They were in many shapes and sizes and written in more kinds of script than Peri would ever have thought possible. Obviously the Doctor kept them in some kind of alphabetical

and chronological order because one of the first that he glanced at was a faded piece of fine parchment.

'Archimedes,' he said. 'Now he was a brilliant young chap.' He recalled spending a delightful afternoon in the sunlight of Syracuse, drinking a dark purple wine and discussing plane geometry with the earnest mathematician.

Before taking his leave he had idly scratched a figure in the sand: the spiral of Archimedes was now a part of earth's scientific history. Strictly against the rules, of course, that sort of thing. You were supposed to leave a culture as you found it. But then he had never been a great respecter of rules and he could see nothing wrong in giving *homo sapiens* the occasional leg-up. Humans were, after all, quite his most favourite species.

'Ah!' he said, at last finding the card he was looking for.

'Dastari! Joinson Dastari, Head of Projects, Space Station J7, Third Zone.'

'Who's he?' Peri said blankly.

'Dastari is the pioneer of genetic engineering,' the Doctor told her, busily setting the TARDIS controls. 'I'll get him to give me a check-over. It'll be worth the trip anyway. His people are doing some fascinating work on rho mesons as the unstable factor in pin galaxies.'

'What are pin galaxies?' Peri asked and then, noticing the gleam that came into the Doctor's eye, immediately wished she hadn't. That look usually presaged a lecture of which she might understand one word in ten.

'Pin galaxies exist within, as it were, the universe of the atom. Difficult to study because they only have a life of about one atto-second.'

'I've no idea what that means.'

The Doctor grinned. 'It means you have to be quick. An atto-second is a quintillionth of a second.'

As he imparted this information he touched a switch and the central column of the console began to oscillate.

'You know,' he said, 'that was rather a good idea of mine, wasn't it?'

'What idea?'

'Getting some medical help,' he said with a smug smile.

Peri opened her mouth. *His* idea? Then she saw his shoulders shake as he suppressed a chuckle. Really, she thought peevishly, for someone who was supposed to be seven hundred and sixty years old he could be extraordinarily childish at times.

'How far is this place,' she said, 'this space station?'

'Oh, about five hundred metres, I should think,' said the Doctor and switched on the vid-screen. The sight that met their eyes was very different from the one that had so impressed Jamie McCrimmon.

No lights now delineated the station's gossamer lattices.

Black against the blackness of the void, it twisted slowly like a gigantic dead spider forever hanging from its final umbilical thread.

Peri knew instinctively that something was terribly wrong. She glanced over at the Doctor and saw his faint frown as he studied the vid-screen.

'It looks absolutely deserted,' she said.

The Doctor nodded slowly. 'Perhaps they're thinking,'

he said.

'Thinking?'

‘Dastari has assembled a team of the finest scientists you could find anywhere. And scientists do a lot of thinking, you know.’

‘In the dark?’ Peri said scathingly.

He touched a switch. ‘Well, we’ll just de-mat and slip in quietly under their detection beams.’

‘Is that necessary? I thought you said they were friendly?’

‘Friendly? They’ll probably be overwhelmingly effusive!’ The Doctor grinned. ‘But I don’t want them all clamouring round trying to touch the hem of my coat. I’m much too modest to enjoy that sort of thing.’

Peri was about to remark on this piece of colossal conceit and then decided it was probably a joke. With the Doctor, she thought, you could never be sure.

‘Let’s go,’ he said.

The TARDIS, pre-programmed to the centimetre, materialised in exactly the same space it had occupied before. But now the kitchens were dark and empty and as they stepped out they were met by a stench so pungently noxious that Peri gagged immediately and covered her face.

‘Oh, Doctor, it’s foul!’ she gasped. ‘Are you sure it’s safe?’

‘Plenty of oxygen.’

‘But that awful smell!’

‘Mainly decaying food,’ said the Doctor, looking keenly around. ‘And corpses.’

‘Corpses?’

He said, ‘That is the smell of death, Peri. Ancient musk heavy in the air. Fruit-soft flesh peeling from white bones.

The unholy, unburiable smell of Verdun and Passchendale and Armageddon. There’s nothing quite so evocative as one’s sense of smell, is there?’

‘I feel sick.’

‘I think you’ll feel sicker before we’re finished here,’ he said, and moved out into the walkway.

Peri followed reluctantly. Not for the first time she thought there was a dark side to the Doctor’s nature. Death seemed to hold a morbid fascination for him. And for someone who professed to abhor violence he certainly brought death down upon others with gruesome regularity.

It was not, she thought, that he deliberately sought trouble so much as that his burning curiosity, always seeking to find what was round the next corner, invariably landed him in dangerous situations. And perhaps it was because death was the last corner of all that he found it so fascinating.

Now, as they moved carefully along the gloomy walkway, he pointed out the scars left by laser bolts and rheon shells and was not quite able to disguise a certain grim relish in marking these relics of battle.

‘What kind of monsters could have wanted to stop the brilliant research work that was being done here?’ he said.

‘It threatened no-one.’

‘It threatened the Time Lords!’

The voice, resonant and metallic, boomed through the walkway. The Doctor stopped and stared around. Then he pointed to a speaker aperture set into the wall.

‘Would you care to repeat that?’ he said silkily.

‘It threatened the Time Lords,’ the voice said again.

The Doctor sniffed. ‘And what put that idea into your apology for a brain?’ he asked.

‘Return to your ship and leave.’

‘Certainly not.’

‘Then this station will switch to defence alert.’

‘I will not be threatened by a computer,’ the Doctor said angrily. ‘And put some lights on.’

There was no reply to this demand – merely a soft click as the speaker system switched off. It suddenly seemed very quiet in the walkway. All Peri could hear was a distant hum, probably the power supply to the computer, and the occasional ping as some drifting piece of space flotsam struck the hull of the station.

Normally, in a functioning spacecraft there was a constant background rumble, like that of a ship at sea.

Now, for the first time, Peri realised the enormous, utter silence of deep space where sound cannot exist. The absence of noise was almost tangible; it was as though she had been deprived of one of her senses.

Because she was concentrating on this unusual new experience of absolute quietness, she was the first to hear it. ‘What’s that noise?’ she asked.

The Doctor cocked his head. The sound was a faint, sibilant whisper, circumambient, its source unlocatable.

‘It’s depressurising this section,’ he said. ‘We’d better get out.’

He pressed a button beside one of the walkway’s exit panels, then gave a resigned shrug. ‘No power, of course.’

Peri shivered. ‘It’s getting colder.’

‘Don’t worry,’ he said consolingly. ‘We’ll die from lack of air before we freeze to death.’

Any comeback she might have made to this didn’t seem worth the effort. Chest and shoulders heaving, she was already sucking for air like a long-distance runner. Her legs felt weak and her head was starting to spin.

The Doctor was searching along the floor near the panel. He gave a grunt of relief as he found the flush-fitting hatch he had expected. Opening the hatch, he removed a metal pump-handle and slotted it into the mechanism behind the hatch. He began to pump, with desperate haste at first, and then slower as the vital oxygen was leached from his bloodstream and not replaced by his gasping lungs.

Beside him, Peri fell back against the wall and then slid down it to lie in a crumpled heap on the floor. He hardly spared her a glance. All his attention, all his will, was centred now on the pump which, with every stroke, became more incorrigibly resistant to his failing strength.

But he had to build up enough hydraulic pressure for the panel to open manually. If not, his life would come to an ignominious end, lying here on his face in this metal deathtrap.

Somehow he lifted his head off the icy floor and got sluggishly back to his knees. He had to feel for the pump handle. It was getting too dark in the walkway for him to see. Wasn’t, of course. Couldn’t be. That darkness was the shroud of death settling over him...

He wanted to lie down again. The pain in his chest was like a living thing. His arms were numb, too heavy to move the pump now. It wasn't fair to expect any more. He had tried his best and it had not been enough.

With a last conscious exertion of will, he forced the pump through two more strokes. The effort destroyed him and he sagged forward to the floor again. But even as he fell he felt the panel sliding aside and heard the roar of a million cubic feet of air repressurising the walkway.

Slowly vision returned and the strength came back to his body. He took Peri by the shoulders and half-carried, half-dragged her into the room behind the panel. Her face was pinched and blue and it took him several minutes to revive her. Then her eyelids fluttered and she looked up at him with eyes that were only vaguely focussed.

'Feeling better?' he asked.

Peri attempted a nod. 'Where are we?' she asked faintly.

'Dastari's office.'

She made an effort to sit up. 'How do you know?'

The Doctor pointed to the battered, wooden desk against one side of the room. 'He liked old, familiar things around him,' he said. 'He worked out the famous Theory of Parallel Matter at that desk. *And* using pen and ink. He detested computers.'

For a moment Peri was tempted to ask about the famous Theory of Parallel Matter but then decided against it. Her head ached enough already. The Doctor, she thought enviously, seemed to have made a complete recovery. He was strolling about peering inquisitively in the gloom at the nick-nacks and artefacts and charts that lay everywhere in chaotic disorder.

Then the lights came on. The Doctor looked up, blinking, and nodded. 'Switching to visual,' he said. 'It must have lost track of us.'

Peri glanced round, looking for the lens of a video monitor but she could see nothing. 'There'll be an electronic eye somewhere,' said the Doctor. 'Do you notice the floor?'

'What about it?' she asked blankly.

'Cork insulation and a carpet.'

'So your friend liked his comforts even in space.'

The Doctor shook his head. 'Not what I meant. That computer has been tracking us by the heat of our feet. In here it couldn't detect us.'

'You mean it got worried and turned the lights on?'

'Something like that.' He began rifling through the drawers of the desk. 'I wonder what it'll try next?'

'You don't think,' Peri said hopefully, 'it might just leave us alone?'

'Most unlikely. Think of it as a game between it and us.'

He had found a heavy ledger and was studying it absorbedly.

Peri tried an ironic laugh but her voice cracked and it came out like the mating cry of a screech owl. She said,

'Doctor, I enjoy games. Tennis, hockey, lacrosse... Games where I'm not expecting to end up dead! Are you listening?'

Still reading, he nodded absently. 'My word, they were doing some incredible work here.'

'You've told me all I want to know about pin galaxies.'

‘It seems some people called Kartz and Reimer were having a degree of success with experiments in time control.’

Peri shrugged. ‘Well, you can already do that,’ she said.

Then she saw a sudden look of dismay on his face.

‘Something wrong?’

‘This last entry,’ the Doctor said slowly. ‘It reads, “The Time Lords are demanding that Kartz and Reimer suspend their work, alleging their experiments are imperilling the continuum. No proof was offered to support this charge so I rejected the demand. Colleagues fear they may forcibly intervene.” ’ He slammed the book shut. ‘No, I refuse to believe it! The use of force is alien to Time Lord nature.’

Peri remembered her earlier thoughts about the Doctor.

He had never seemed too averse to the use of force. ‘Maybe someone’s setting the Time Lords up,’ she said.

‘Setting up?’ He stared for a second before fathoming her meaning. ‘Yes, of course! It could be a crude attempt to drive a wedge between Gallifrey and the Third Zone governments.’

‘Who’d benefit from that, Doctor?’

He shrugged. ‘That’s something we have to find out.’

‘If we ever get out of here alive,’ Peri reminded him. ‘It’s getting awfully hot in here.’

‘I wondered when you’d notice that,’ he said. ‘Having failed to freeze us to death it’s now trying to bake us. It seems to be a machine with a distinctly limited repertoire.’

‘So who needs anything fancy?’ Peri said. ‘What are you doing?’

For a moment she feared he had gone mad. He was attacking a tall mobile sculpture that stood near the desk, breaking it apart with his bare hands. He stepped back, panting slightly, and straightened a loop of wire that he had wrenched off the sculpture.

‘I knew there must be a purpose for that sort of art,’ he said. ‘The computer’s been forced to restore the power to this section but it hasn’t energised the door mechanisms. However, I think I can manage it with this.’

He took his length of wire across to the panel and began probing behind the wall button. Peri watched him, wiping away the sweat that was now trickling down her face.

‘And what do we do if we get out?’ she asked.

‘Find our way to that homicidal computer and put it out of action.’

‘How do we do that without getting zapped on the way?’

‘We go down into the infrastructure. No detection instruments down there.’

‘And how do we get down there?’

He glared round irritably. ‘My dear girl, will you stop asking so many questions? There’s a garbage chute in the kitchen. We’ll slide down that.’

As he turned back to the wall button there was a flash and an explosion from behind it. The Doctor jumped back, sucking his fingers. Then he gave the wall panel a push and it slid aside. He peered out cautiously.

‘The main thing to remember,’ he said, ‘is that we have to get down that walkway as fast as we can.’

He came back to her and gave her a comforting pat on the shoulder and there was the tense smile on his face that she had seen so often in their moments of gravest danger.

‘Are you ready?’ he asked.
‘I guess so,’ Peri said doubtfully.
‘All right,’ said the Doctor. ‘Run!’

# 4

**Adios, Doña Arana**

For nine minutes that morning in May the radar systems of seven countries in Western Europe were completely dead. A Pan-Am DC8 and a BA Trident, stacked over Rome airport, narrowly avoided a mid-air collision that would have cost several hundred lives. The failure, unprecendented and inexplicable, caused consternation at NATO headquarters. The Pentagon, fearing that the Soviets had developed a new jamming device operated from space, lobbied Congress for a massive increase in the defence budget. The Kremlin took sour note and increased its own arms expenditure. World War III came a small step nearer...

Chessene was unaware of any of this and would have been indifferent had she known. The elimination of light waves and radio beams was standard procedure when landing on an unknown planet.

The Delta-Six touched down quietly in thickly wooded country in that part of southern Spain known as Andalusia.

Shockeye, the tools of his bloody trade gleaming from a waist-belt, was the first out. Despite the provisions he had taken aboard, the journey had left him famished. Towards its end he had even been looking covetously at Varl although he knew, from past experience, that the flesh of cloned species was coarse and lacking in flavour.

He had spent much of his time on the ship studying the various types of fauna he might expect to encounter on this new planet. Now he looked round eagerly for awandering bison, a dog, or a passing kangaroo. Nothing moved, however, in the choked undergrowth of the olive grove and, with a sigh of disappointment, he set off towards the building they had seen minutes earlier on breaking cloud cover.

Chessene, smiling at his impetuosity, followed in Shockeye's tracks. Varl, carrying the heavy homing beacon that would guide Group Marshal Stike to them, brought up the rear. Even with Shockeye's bulk to force a path through the dense undergrowth, progress was slow and it took them several minutes before they reached the habitation they had seen from the air.

The hacienda of the Doña Arana lay at the foot of a small hill amid nearly three thousand hectares of what had once been a thriving olive plantation. But that was over twenty years before when her husband, Don Vincente Arana, was alive.

Upon his death she had dismissed her servants and estate workers and become a recluse, alone in her remote fastness. The plantation had fallen into desuetude and the house, neglected and decaying, was a crumbling ruin although still grand enough to convey its former magnificence.

The visitors from space stood in the hacienda's unweeded courtyard and studied it. Surrounded by several outbuildings, it was a long house, two storeys high. Its front portico showed a Moorish influence. All the windows were shuttered but many of the shutters sagged from broken hinges and the once-white stucco walls were leprous and peeling.

Chessene nodded with satisfaction. 'Excellent,' she said.

Varl looked at her incredulously. 'It is a silicon dioxide structure quite unsuitable for defence.'

Chessene ignored him. ‘I detect only one occupant,’ she told Shockeye. ‘A female.’

‘Don’t use the gas-injector, madam,’ Shockeye said pleadingly. ‘They totally destroy the flesh. I’ll slaughter it myself.’

‘It might not be edible, Shockeye. I detect great age.

Come.’

They went towards the house where the Doña Arana, unaware that she had visitors, was completing her morning devotions at the small shrine she had caused to be built in the year that her three children died of smallpox.

The Doña, a stooped little woman in her ninetieth year of life, recited her penitence and prayed for absolution. She couldn’t remember any sins lately but she asked that they be forgiven, anyway, and in view of the unfortunate mishap that was about to befall her it was perhaps as well that she did so.

Normally, after this, it was her practice to light a candle and leave it flickering at the foot of the icon surrounded by the silver-framed, faded photographs of her husband and children. But she had used the last candle the previous day and would have no more until Father Ignatius, who brought her few needs, called again. So today she placed what she believed was a small red rose at the foot of the shrine. The fact that it was a piece of wild bramble was doubtless of little concern to her Deity. It is the thought that counts.

With this duty done, the Doña clambered arthritically to her feet and, with the aid of a stick, made her way back towards the hall. She needed the stick for support, not to find her way around; she knew the house better than the back of her own gnarled hand.

So it was a shock when she walked into a wall. Then she realised she had stumbled into a person and in her confusion thought it must be Father Ignatius because nobody else visited the hacienda. She was reminding herself to tell him about the candles when she remembered the priest was quite a small man. All this in less than a second. She had no time to feel fear before Shockeye broke her neck.

‘It cannot see,’ he said, clamping a hand that could have held six pounds of apples round the Doña’s wrinkled neck.

Such was the force of his grip that the atlas and axis vertebrae, those that support the globe of the skull, splintered instantly into granulated powder. He let the frail body fall.

‘Its bones are dry and brittle,’ he said regretfully, saddened that his first Tellurian should be of such inferior quality.

‘I sensed it was very old,’ Chessene said. ‘But its mind will be of use. Bring it through.’

She walked off. Shockeye said, ‘You carry it, Varl.’

The Sontaran glared. ‘I don’t take orders from civilians,’

he said coldly and followed Chessene from the hall.

Shockeye stared after him malevolently, fighting an urge to smash the bald brown skull into a jammy pulp. But such accounts could be settled later and a pleasure deferred was often all the sweeter for it.

He carried the corpse through to the next room where Chessene, already seated, was building up her concentration for the memory transference. She did this by holding the head – grotesquely loose since Shockeye’s demonstration of strength –

in both hands, her thumbs pressing into the eyeballs and her fingers cupping the back of the skull.

For a short time she appeared to go into a deep trance.

Then she sighed and released the body.

'There was little knowledge in that paltry brain,' she said. 'You can incinerate the remains now, Shockeye.'

'Very good, madam.'

While Shockeye disposed of the Doña Arana, Chessene explored the hacienda. She was pleased to find it possessed several airy, interlinking cellars that were ideally suited to her purpose. She did not expect that there would be any interruptions but it was as well to have a place where the work could go on without any possibility of hindrance.

Especially the delicate work that she had planned.

In other respects she was disappointed with the primitive facilities the house provided. They would need to bring in a lot of equipment from the spaceship.

Dismantling it and installing it in the cellars would take them the rest of the day.

She decided that Varl would have to do the work of installation while she and Shockeye did the fetching and carrying. She herself could easily pass as a human and even Shockeye, from a distance, would not appear too outlandish. But the Sontaran was obviously not of this world so it would be wise to keep him well out of sight.

From what she had gleaned from the Doña's mind, Chessene thought there would be little danger of prying eyes – the hacienda was quite remote – but she was not prepared to take any risks. Although they were well equipped to defend themselves if necessary, she did not want to arouse any curiosity or interference on the part of humans.

She went to tell the others what she had decided. Varl was erecting the homing beacon on the roof and she found Shockeye in the kitchen contemptuously examining the hacienda's Toledo steel carving-knives.

'Low-grade carbon steel, madam,' he said, snapping one between his fingers. 'Fortunately, I brought my own.'

When she told him that between them they would have to strip the spaceship he gave an enthusiastic grunt of assent. She was a little surprised at his willingness; on the space station it had always been difficult to get Shockeye to carry out any duties not directly connected with the preparation of food. But the truth was that the smell of the cooking meat, when he burned the Doña Arana's corpse, had started his stomach juices boiling. Going to and fro across the plantation might afford him the chance of catching something edible. A grey-lag goose, he thought, or perhaps a crocodile.

But though they spent the rest of that day at their work, he saw nothing but a few small birds that flew away as he approached. He began to doubt if the planet was as rich in fauna as was claimed.

By the early evening their preparations were complete.

An energy-bank was in position and functioning in the main cellar, along with all the ancillary apparatus – linear accelerator, electron magnascope, centrifuge, laser enhancer, particle processor, and much other machinery that Chessene knew would be needed. She looked round the cellar with satisfaction. When the Group Marshal arrived, bringing with him the Kartz-Reimer module and Dastari's surgical equipment – and, of course, the patient, she thought with a smile – they could begin work.

'It is time to switch on the homing beacon,' she told Varl.

He nodded and turned to leave the cellar. ‘Tell the Group Marshal to make a discreet landing,’ Chessene went on. ‘This planet is greatly over-populated.’

‘By the time I leave it, madam, that may not be a problem,’ Shockeye said, and chuckled throatily at his rare shaft of wit.

‘Tell him we are only four kilometres from a city,’

Chessene said as the Sontaran left.

A look of interest crossed Shockeye’s face. ‘Is the eating good there, madam?’

‘The Doña Arana had little interest in food, Shockeye.

Her mind was full of her religion.’

‘I am not interested in the beliefs of primitives,’

Shockeye said. ‘Only in what they taste like.’ Another chuckle shook his body. He was, he thought, in good form today.

Chessene eyed him with faint distaste. ‘In some ways, Shockeye o’ the Quawncing Grig, you are a complete primitive yourself.’

Shockeye swung on her angrily, his unpredictable temper suddenly at white heat. ‘You say that, Chessene,’ he snarled, ‘only because of the foreign, alien filth Dastari injected into you. But, come what may, you are an Androgum. Never lose sight of your horizons.’

For a moment they stood glaring at each other, eyeball to eyeball, and then Chessene gave a nod of assent. She knew she could not afford to quarrel with Shockeye at this stage. She needed his co-operation.

‘It is true,’ she said, choosing her words carefully. ‘We are a race apart. Our difference lies deep in the blood and the bone. But we cannot continue with the old ways, Shockeye. We have new ways now of... digesting our enemies.’

While Chessene mollified Shockeye, her other ally, Group Marshal Stike – still over a thousand miles distant –

settled his craft into an elliptical landing orbit. He had received Varl’s warning and switched on full mufflers to silence the engines.

It was a precaution that was to prove unavailing because at that very moment there were two figures, a man and girl, making their way along the dusty track that led to the old plantation.

The man’s name was Oscar Botcherby, a podgy-looking forty-year-old dressed, rather absurdly, as though for a safari in darkest Africa. In one hand he carried, from a strap, a battered, brass-bound wooden box. In his other hand he held a circular, metal-framed net with a cane handle. And from his waist dangled two old-fashioned lanterns.

The girl with him, a pretty, dark-haired Andalusian, was called Anita. She wore a flimsy, brightly-coloured cotton dress, cut low on her brown shoulders. She was bare-legged and the delicate tracery of her thin sandals made a sharp contrast with her companion’s calf-high combat boots. Not unnaturally, he was sweating heavily while she was as fresh as the posy of wild flowers she had collected along the way.

They came eventually to a crumbling stone wall that, as is customary in the province of Seville, though not elsewhere in Southern Spain, marked the boundaries of the plantation.

Oscar noticed a faded sign hanging at a drunken angle from its rotting post. ‘What does that say, Anita?’ he asked.

‘Keep Out,’ Anita said, picking her way lightly across the rubble of the wall.

Oscar stopped. ‘Oh, well,’ he said nervously, ‘perhaps we had better.’

Anita laughed at him. ‘It doesn’t matter, Oscar,’ she said. ‘It’s a very old sign.’

‘Yes, but –’

‘No-one lives in the hacienda now, Oscar. Only the Doña Arana.’

‘The Doña Arana?’

‘An old lady. Don Vincente Arana’s widow. She never leaves the house,’ she told him, holding out a beckoning hand. ‘Come along.’

‘Where is the house?’ Oscar asked, hanging back reluctantly. He hoped it was a good distance away.

Memories of boyhood and the angry owners of apple orchards pressed in on him.

‘Over behind those trees.’ Anita pointed a slim arm adorned with flashing gypsy bangles. ‘In the old days, when my mother worked for the Don, it was like a palace.

Now it is falling down.’

The trees to which she pointed, towering, red-flowered Spanish chestnuts, were at least half a mile away. Oscar brightened. ‘ “When I have seen by Time’s fell hand defaced,” ’ he quoted, in his mellifluous actor’s voice, ‘

“The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age.” ’

The Bard, he thought. Always good for a quote. He couldn’t remember the play. Perhaps it was from one of the sonnets.

Anita led him into a stand of gnarled olive trees. ‘This is the place,’ she said. ‘There always used to be hundreds of moths in this little wood.’

Oscar glanced about approvingly. ‘Yes, it looks like splendid moth country. Of course, we’re a little early yet,’

he said. ‘Moths are ladies of the night. Painted beauties sleeping all day and rising at sunset to whisper through the roseate dusk on gossamer wings of damask and silk.’

Anita’s eyes widened. ‘You really like them, don’t you?’

she said wonderingly. Her only interest in moths was in making sure they didn’t get entangled in her hair.

‘I adore them,’ Oscar said.

‘Then why do you kill them?’

It seemed a good question but he looked at her as though she were simple. ‘So that I can look at them,’ he said, setting one of his oil-lanterns down on a tree stump.

He raised the mantle to light the wick.

‘Isn’t it a little early?’ Anita asked. Although it was dark in the shade of the overgrown trees, the black velvet of a Mediterranean night was still hours away.

‘They start flying at dusk,’ Oscar said. ‘Besides I gave my word to Pierre that we would be back in the restaurant by eight. The poor boy gets so alarmed at any hint of responsibility.’

He bent to light his second lantern. ‘What are the lanterns for, Oscar?’ she asked.

‘Moths to the flame, my dear.’ He smiled and swished his net through the air. ‘Then I catch them and put them in my cyanide box.’

‘Cyanide? Isn’t that terribly dangerous?’

‘Not if one is careful,’ Oscar said. ‘I’ve used cyanide since I was a boy. It’s quicker and kinder to the little creatures than ammonia.’

‘And what do you do with the poor things when they’re dead?’

‘I mount them in my collection –’ He broke off and glanced up. From the swelling roar of engines it sounded as though an aircraft was passing low overhead. Oscar could see nothing through the canopy of foliage. He turned back to Anita.

‘So that I can sit and admire them,’ he concluded loudly.

‘Don’t you have a television?’ Anita asked. It was a question Oscar barely heard. The roar of the engines was now shatteringly loud; it sounded as though the jet was coming straight for them.

‘Get down!’ he shouted, and threw himself prone, dragging Anita with him.

Something passed low overhead causing the sturdy old olive trees to shiver like aspens in the wind of its passing.

The noise of the engines faded and then stopped abruptly.

They sat up shakily. Oscar wiped his face.

‘I thought it was going to hit us,’ he said.

‘It must have crashed!’ She scrambled to her feet. ‘Over that way somewhere. Come on, Oscar!’

‘What?’

‘Someone might need help.’

‘Oh, I do hope not!’ said Oscar. ‘I can’t bear the sight of gory entrails except, of course, on the stage.’

But Anita had gone, forcing her way through the thick undergrowth. Oscar sighed helplessly and followed.

Perhaps she was wrong, he thought. He had not heard any sound of a crash. Surely there should have been an explosion, the rending of metal, hideous screams? But there had been nothing like that, he comforted himself, so it was probably some idiotic stunt-flyer, a mad young fool with a big moustache and goggles.

He emerged, panting, on the hillside above the hacienda. ‘Look,’ Anita said. ‘Down there!’

Squinting into the rays of the sinking sun, Oscar followed her pointing finger. Down below, just moving into the courtyard, he saw a small group of people. Two of them seemed to be carrying the limp body of a third between them. It was hard to see clearly but the leading figure appeared to be wearing a helmet; the lunatic pilot, Oscar concluded.

‘It must have crashed,’ Anita said. ‘Come on.’

Oscar clung to her arm. ‘Please, Anita,’ he said, ‘don’t let’s go any nearer. They may be suffering from the most appalling injuries.’

‘The Doña Arana won’t be able to help them, Oscar.

And there’s no telephone. We have to see if we can help!’

‘What can we do?’ Oscar inquired reasonably. ‘No, no, Anita – the obvious course is to summon help as quickly as possible. They need the ministrations of competent, official people trained in the art of tying bandages.’

Anita looked at him for a moment, torn between Oscar’s pragmatism – which clearly made sense – and her own impulse to run down the hillside to tend the injured. Then, to his silent relief, she gave a little nod.

‘I suppose you’re right, Oscar,’ she said. ‘But we’ve got to hurry. People might be dying down there.’

‘Absolutely,’ said Oscar. He didn’t mind hurrying, so long as it was in the opposite direction. ‘We must fly to the nearest telephone and apprise the authorities of this dreadful tragedy.’

# Creature of the Darkness

It was very dark down in the station's infrastructure. If some of the conduits over which the Doctor and Peri were clambering had not emitted a cold, phosphorescent glow the blackness would have been Stygian. Even after her eyes adjusted to the conditions, Peri found it hard to see the Doctor and he was crawling along only a few feet in front of her.

'All right, Peri?' he called back.

'Oh, sure!' she said acidly. 'I can't remember the last time I had so much fun.'

The Doctor stopped moving and waited for her to crawl up alongside. 'Time to take a rest,' he said.

Peri flopped thankfully beside him. 'All I hope is we're going the right way.'

'No doubt of it,' the Doctor said cheerfully. 'If you notice, all the service ducts run in this direction. And they must feed the central control room.'

'It would be easier if we could see.'

'Never mind. It can't be much further.'

'Just far enough to lose the skin off another leg,' Peri said. She tapped the coils of pipes that were twined together in apparently random confusion like petrified snakes. 'What is all this stuff, anyway?'

'Fluidic streams,' the Doctor informed her. He took out a knife and stripped the lagging from one of the pipes.

'Interesting application of an old idea. I think I detect Dastari's hand in the design.'

He cut into the pipe, which appeared to be of some soft, malleable metal, and an oily fluid oozed out. 'There you are, look.'

'Should you have done that?' Peri said dubiously.

'They're self-sealing,' he said. 'This fluid carries a signal just as the signal in electronic circuits is carried by the flow of electrons. But the advantage of a fluidic device is that –'

'Doctor!'

'– cold, heat, radiation, vibration, etcetera, don't disturb it in the way they might an electrical device,' the Doctor said, then added: 'Yes, what is it?'

Peri shook her head. 'I thought I heard something. I was trying to listen but you went on talking!'

'I was imparting a little knowledge,' he said severely.

'When you ask a question you should pay attention to the answer, my girl. Otherwise you'll gain absolutely no benefit from being in my company.'

'No benefit?' Peri gave a caustic laugh. 'Doctor, I can't tell you how I appreciate being frozen, asphyxiated, half-cooked and then forced to crawl through miles of pipes!'

'Well, that's good. Because we may have another mile to go. Come on.'

'Wait,' she said, seizing his arm. 'Listen!'

'What?'

'I heard it again,' she said, peering fearfully into the darkness. 'Doctor, there's something down here with us.'

'That's impossible. You're imagining it.'

Peri shook her head stubbornly. 'I tell you I'm certain I heard something.'

‘Hydraulics.’

‘What?’

‘Some of these pumping systems are showing their age,’

he said. ‘You can expect the odd wheeze. Come on.’

He led the way on again and Peri, with a hopeless shrug at his obduracy, followed him. But they had only moved on a yard or so when a low, vicious snarl from the blackness ahead brought the Doctor to an abrupt stop.

‘That is the fiercest pump I ever heard,’ Peri said.

‘I think,’ said the Doctor quietly, ‘there is something down here with us, Peri.’

‘What are we going to do?’ she asked, trying to keep the quaver from her voice.

‘We’re going on. I think it’s more frightened of us than we are of it.’

‘Oh, really? In that case it must be a quaking heap.’

‘Anyway, nothing large could survive down here for very long,’ the Doctor said. He sounded to be reassuring himself as much as Peri. ‘There can’t be much to eat in the effluent channels.’

‘But where’s it come from?’ she asked. ‘We’re millions of miles out in space.’

‘Oh, that’s easily explained,’ he said, starting to move forward again. ‘If they were working on animal genetics some small creature might well have escaped and found its way down here.’

‘How small, Doctor? I mean, really small, like a squirrel?’

He didn’t answer but crawled on into the darkness. Peri, sticking as closely to him as she could, thought she could cope with a squirrel. Besides, they only ate nuts and stuff.

Yet that snarl had been loud and menacing and somehow she couldn’t picture a squirrel waving its bushy tail and making that kind of sound.

But although they dragged themselves on for what seemed an age she heard nothing more. Several times she turned sharply round with an uneasy feeling that they were being watched but there was nothing to be seen. On the other hand, she thought, an army could lie concealed in the dark interstices between the conduits and remain invisible.

Finally, the Doctor gave a grunt of satisfaction and pointed to a thicket of piping, clustered together like the rooting branches of a banian tree, that ran up into the roof of the infrastructure.

‘Here we are,’ he said. ‘We’re under the control centre now.’

Diving into the thicket, he began unfastening the union joints on some of the pipes. Peri watched him apprehensively. ‘I hope you know what you’re doing,’ she said. ‘It looks very complicated.’

‘Not at all,’ the Doctor said confidently. ‘These Type 49

systems are always colour-coded. Defence mechanisms are red. Power supplies yellow and so on...’ his voice faded as he moved further into the maze.

‘There’s a ladder over here,’ Peri called.

‘Yes, I saw it. Leads to the control centre... Blue? You know, I can’t remember what blue stands for.’

Peri craned her head to see him. ‘Can I help?’

‘No, no, this is a job for the expert,’ he said. ‘You often find they booby-trapped these computers to prevent tampering. The Berberese Noose was a favourite.’

‘What’s the Berberese Noose?’

‘Very nasty. It leaves you without a head.’ He rubbed his nose thoughtfully. ‘I wish I could remember what these blue lines serve... Oh, well...’

He edged on to unfasten further connections. Peri went over to examine the ladder more closely. Something squelched under her foot and she jumped back with a startled gasp. Peering down, in the atramentous gloom, she saw a curious collection of oddments.

There were several bits of rag, some wire, what looked like a metal scoop, a few gnawed bones, stripped of flesh, and an exotic yellow fruit. It was the latter item that she had stepped on. From the way it was piled together it had obviously been assembled for a reason. She thought it was something the Doctor should see.

‘Doctor! Over here,’ she called.

‘What is it?’ he called back.

‘I don’t know. Come and see.’

‘In a minute. Nearly finished.’

Peri stooped again to see what other odds and ends might be in the pile. Then she heard a feral snarl and in the same instant she was flung to the floor by a clawing black shape. Peri screamed in fright as the creature’s raking talons closed on her throat.

The Doctor heard her cry and realised his companion had met trouble. ‘Peri!’ he called, stepping back and turning carelessly. His sudden movement shattered a glass tube that he had been cautiously avoiding. Immediately a cloud of acrid, yellow gas spurted into his face. Choking and clutching at his throat, he fell back over the coiling pipes to hang suspended, like a dead bird stuck in a hedge.

None of Peri’s desperate calls for help reached his ears.

She had recovered her wits and was fighting her attacker off grimly but she could have done with some assistance. A limb pressed smotheringly across her face and she sank her teeth into it savagely. There was a gratifying yell of pain and the creature sprang back, spitting and snarling its hatred. Then it charged in again and Peri aimed a full-blooded punch at where she judged its head should be.

She was not a big girl but her muscles had been honed by years as a campus sports star. When the blow landed the shockwave drilled numbingly up her arm and into her shoulder. It felt as though she had punched a wall but the effect on the creature was dramatic. It slumped to the floor as though hit with a mallet. For the first time, she saw that what she had thought was fur was, in fact, a ragged blanket tied around its body.

Peri rubbed her bruised knuckles. ‘Thanks for your help, Doctor,’ she called sarcastically. There was no reply and she called to him again. When he still did not reply she went over to see what he was doing and found that he was doing nothing very much. Just hanging about. Gas was still seeping from the nozzle above him.

Alarm clutched like a hand at Peri’s throat. She took him by the shoulders and heaved. His sagging body was a dead weight and she thought she would never get him clear of the coiling pipes. But she moved him slowly, inch by inch, until she could lay him down to examine him. She peeled up an eyelid and was relieved to see a flicker of movement.

She shook him roughly and slapped his face. ‘Come on, Doctor! Wake up!’

He stirred and mumbled as though emerging from a deep sleep. ‘Come on! Get up!’ she said, shaking him again.

The Doctor’s eyes opened. He stared up at her woozily.

‘Peri? What happened? Why did you call?’

‘That thing we thought was an animal attacked me,’ she said. ‘And it’s human, I think.’

The Doctor sat up, rubbing his head. ‘If you hadn’t called me I wouldn’t have triggered that stun jet,’ he said reproachfully. ‘And it can’t be human. They haven’t reached this part of the galaxy yet.’

‘Well, it’s humanoid at any rate. Come and see.’

He got to his feet and looked at the last wisps of vapour clearing from the stun jet. ‘Vorum gas,’ he said. ‘An ordinary person would have been unconscious for hours.’

‘So would you if I hadn’t pulled you clear of it,’ Peri said.

He shook his head smugly. ‘No, I closed my respiratory passages the moment I detected the danger.’ He gazed down at the ragged shape on the floor. ‘Yes,’ he conceded,

‘it does look to be humanoid. So it finally mustered the courage to attack.’

‘I think it was my fault – it was protecting its larder.’

She waved at the meagre store of precious property.

The Doctor knelt beside the unconscious body and rolled it over on its back. Then he stared in disbelief.

Beneath the grime and the whiskers was the face of Jamie McCrimmon.

‘It’s Jamie!’ he said, and his voice was shocked. ‘But how did he get here? He should be with me.’

‘He isn’t with you, Doctor. Not any more.’

He stared up at her. ‘No, that’s right. But if he’s here, where am I? I must have been here, Peri!’

‘You mean in some past time?’ she asked. It was all getting a bit complicated.

Jamie groaned and started to come round. But as he looked up and saw the Doctor and Peri leaning over him he flinched away, gibbering with terror.

‘It’s all right, Jamie,’ the Doctor said soothingly. Peri tried to take his hand. ‘We’re your friends,’ she said. ‘We’re not going to hurt you.’

But Jamie only pulled away violently, trembling with fear. ‘Keep away!’ he moaned. Peri thought that his long ordeal in the silent depths of the space station, coupled with the horrors that he must have witnessed, had affected his mind.

The Doctor took a slim leather case from one of his voluminous pockets. ‘Hold him still,’ he ordered.

Opening the case, he slipped out a set of long, skewer-like needles, one of which he plunged instantly into the side of Jamie’s neck.

‘Doctor!’

‘Don’t worry. It will help him relax,’ he said, stabbing three more of the long needles into Jamie’s thorax and shoulders. Jamie moaned and sank back with his eyes closed.

‘Relax!’ Peri said. ‘You’ve killed him!’

‘Don’t be ridiculous. I seem to remember I was always rather fond of Jamie.’

‘He’s not moving,’ Peri pointed out accusingly.

‘That’s because his nervous system is
temporarily paralysed,’ the Doctor said. ‘He’ll be fine shortly.’

‘Doctor...’ Jamie said, eyes still closed.

‘Yes, Jamie?’

‘I don’t think he’s talking to you,’ said Peri.

‘They killed the Doctor,’ Jamie said, his face contorted with the remembered agony.

‘I’m afraid he’s deranged,’ said the Doctor. ‘It’s the effect of extreme fear.’

Peri tried again to take his hands in hers. This time he did not pull away. ‘Jamie, look at me. Don’t be frightened.

My name’s Peri. I’m your friend, do you understand?

Friend...’

Jamie opened his eyes and gazed up at her. He seemed to grow calmer. The terror left his face and she thought he looked very young and lost.

‘They killed the Doctor,’ he said.

‘He seems very sure of that, doesn’t he? It must have made an impression.’

Peri looked up at him. ‘Is it possible?’

‘Of course not. I exist. Therefore I am and was.’

‘Don’t go through that irrefutable logic again.’

‘Oh, yes. When I had that mind-slip.’ He scratched his nose thoughtfully.

‘You did say you were being put to death,’ Peri reminded him.

‘So I did. I remember now. Could it have been here?’

‘Don’t ask me,’ she said. ‘I don’t understand any of it.

The Doctor produced a pendant on a chain. The stone glowed even in the darkness with a deep, inner fire. He began swinging it slowly and rhythmically in front of Jamie’s eyes. He said, ‘Watch this pretty thing, Jamie. See how it swings backwards and forwards... forwards and backwards. It makes your eyes feel very heavy. You want to close your eyes... close your eyes and sleep.’

Jamie’s eyes closed and the Doctor gave a smile of satisfaction. He slipped the pendant back into his pocket and said, ‘Jamie, why did you come here with the Doctor?’

‘To see Dastari,’ Jamie said.

‘And did you see him?’

‘Aye. They had an argument.’

‘The Doctor had an argument with Dastari? What about?’

‘The Time Lords.’

‘Do you remember what happened then, Jamie?’

‘Aye, there was a battle. The potato-heads came and killed everyone.’

‘The potato-heads?’ said the Doctor thoughtfully. ‘Tell me about them. What were they like?’

‘They had like armour,’ Jamie said. ‘Heavy. No necks.

And they had only two fingers. They killed everyone! They killed the Doctor! I saw them!’

Hysteria was creeping back into his voice and the Doctor calmed him with a gentle hand on his brow. ‘All right, Jamie. Sleep now,’

He removed the long needles from Jamie’s body and placed them back in their case. ‘He just gave a fairly accurate description of the Sontarans,’ he told Peri. And she noticed that the normally cherubic face was set in hard planes.

‘You mentioned them, too, after your mind-slip,’ she said.

He got to his feet with sudden briskness. ‘Let’s see if anything’s recorded in that computer.’ He headed for the ladder that led to the control chamber.

‘What about Jamie?’

‘He’ll be all right now,’ he said, beginning to climb. ‘A little sleep’s the best thing for him.’

Peri followed him up the ladder and came up through a trapdoor into the computer room. The Doctor was already over by the control banks. ‘Thanks to Jamie, I’m beginning to understand what happened here now,’ he said.

‘Obviously, the Sontarans forced Dastari to write that last entry in his day-journal before they killed him.’

‘Why?’ she asked.

‘Who knows?’ The Doctor shrugged. ‘But they’re rabidly xenophobic. Maybe they thought the Third Zone was becoming too powerful and might ally itself with the Rutans.’ He pressed a touch-pad on the control panel. ‘Is that the answer?’

‘No speak,’ said the computer.

‘No speak? What sort of language is that?’

‘Central fault. No speak.’

‘Oh, dear,’ the Doctor said resignedly. ‘I suppose I’ve disconnected one of its verbal neurons. Still, the data bank seems to be functioning.’

His fingers raced expertly over the touch-pads as he began scrolling up information on the display screens.

‘Who are the Rutans, Doctor?’ Peri said.

He didn’t look round. He said, ‘The Sontarans and the Rutans are old enemies. They’ve been fighting across the galaxy for so long they’ve forgotten what started it... Ah, here we are! This is the Kartz and Reimer work!’

He studied the screens with absorption. Most of the data was contained in long chains of mathematical symbols that meant nothing to Peri. She turned to the long looking-glass in the wall and studied her reflection. She looked an absolute mess, she thought. Still, that was hardly surprising after what the Doctor had subjected her to during the past hour or so.

Turning from the mirror, she noticed a stack of containers on the shelves beside it. She opened one simply out of curiosity and found that it held tubes of fruit sucrose and protein concentrate. She turned excitedly, holding up the container. ‘Look, Doctor, food! Shall I take it to Jamie?’

He stared back at her emptily, his face suddenly haggard and his eyes haunted because they, alone in the universe, had seen into extinction. ‘It is possible,’ he muttered.

‘What is?’

The Doctor put a hand to his head. She had rarely seen him looking so weak. ‘That I was killed,’ he said. ‘It’s why I collapsed – that weakness I felt!’

‘But you’ve said you can’t be dead then and here now.’

He got up and paced agitatedly up and down the control room. ‘Yes, if I arrived here during one of these time experiments... caught in an embolism and therefore outside the time flow. But that means I was at the very epicentre of the engulfing chaos!’

Peri stared at him. His distress was obvious. She said,

‘Doctor, I don’t understand.’

‘The holistic fabric of time is like a balloon, Peri. Put a pin into it and the universe will collapse in on itself. Now that process has started, nothing can stop it!’

‘That’s crazy!’

He looked at her sadly. ‘Rassilon predicted that it might happen. It’s always been the great fear of the Time Lords.

All the mass in the universe compressed into a single giant quasar!’

‘How long will that take?’ Peri asked.

‘For everything to end? A very few centuries.’

‘Centuries?’ she said. ‘Oh, well! If it’s not going to happen right away I’ll take this down to Jamie.’ And she went off with the container of food.

The Doctor shook his head. Peri’s poor human mind simply could not begin to understand the enormity of the coming calamity, the chain-reaction that would destroy everything from the tiniest insects to the mightiest star-systems. All forms of life, all the wonderful manifestations of prodigal nature, would be crushed back into one inconceivably dense mass of carbon.

There would be no light.

There would be nothing.

Eternal blackness, he thought. No more sunsets. No more peacocks. Nevermore the iridescent fragility of a butterfly or the lithe, feline grace of a tiger. All the beautiful animals that walked on a million worlds would disappear into oblivion.

And there was not one of those dumb creatures that knew aught of envy or pride, prejudice or resentment.

They were not driven by the thirst for power or a hunger for dominance; all they ever sought was the contentment of a full belly and the warmth of a sun to lie in. Left only to animals, he thought, the universe would have survived for eternity.

No, it was the intelligent species who, by observation and deduction, pieced together the cosmic jigsaw, who saw the connection between a clod of mud and a moonbeam and could descry orderly patterns in the swirling sands of life – it was the intelligent species, driven by the unquenchable fires of ambition, who made the bad mistakes. Was intelligence, therefore, to prove the ultimate folly?

Somehow the Doctor could not accept that. Without intelligence, no chasms would have been bridged. There would have been no cathedrals, no symphonies, no sonnets, no equations. And the pathways to the stars would never have been traversed.

He took another measured pace, deep in thought, and turned to retrace his steps and then, for a stunned moment, felt as though he had been kicked in the stomach. Peri was imprisoned in a heavy glass cylinder at the other side of the room. Rippling blue fire outlined her body as she writhed in agony, clawing helplessly at the glass that confined her.

The Doctor raced to her aid and actually had a hand on the cylinder’s curving door when he stopped, with a sudden knowing expression, and stepped back. He turned to the computer and touched one of its graphics display keys. Instantly, Peri vanished from the cylinder and was replaced by another tortured figure. The Doctor recognised Dastari. It was a perfect holographic forgery, he thought.

He touched the key again and another figure appeared that he didn’t recognise. A rather scruffy person in an ill-fitting tailcoat and black string necktie.

The Doctor switched the machine off and sank back into the control chair with his mind racing. Although he would instantly recognise the Brigadier or Leela or any of his past companions, he had scarcely any recollection of how he himself had appeared in past forms. Nonetheless, he thought, it was all Lombard Street to a China orange that the chap in the tailcoat was himself.

In which case, not only had his sartorial taste improved, but at last it was all beginning to make sense.

**6**

# The Bell Tolls

When Peri returned to the control centre some minutes later she saw at once that the Doctor had lost his haggard look. The care had vanished from his eyes and he was sitting at the computer-bank beaming like a seraph.

She helped Jamie McCrimmon up through the trapdoor. 'Doctor, Jamie's better,' she said.

'That's nae the Doctor,' said Jamie, staring.

'I am so,' said the Doctor happily. 'Peri, watch this.' He switched on the hologram within the cylinder.

Peri stared in shock at her tortured image. 'Oh, stop it!,' she begged. 'It's horrible.'

'Lifelike, isn't it?' he said, turning off the display. 'Or, rather, deathlike.'

'That's how they killed the Doctor,' Jamie said.

The Doctor shook his head. 'The Sontarans left this illusion because they wanted to make it appear that I was dead so that there would be no investigation into my disappearance. So obviously I'm being held captive somewhere.'

'Well, why am I in it?' Peri asked.

'That was their mistake. They left the animator switched on and when you looked in that' – he pointed to the looking-glass – 'it copied your body-print.'

'You dinna think the Doctor's dead?' Jamie said incredulously. 'I mean *my* Doctor?'

'No, I don't, Jamie,' the Doctor said cheerily. Leaning back in his chair, he explained to Peri and the rather bewildered young Scot that if he was not dead in his earlier form then his theory about the time embolism was also wrong. The universe was not condemned to extinction. His mistake had been to draw conclusions from incomplete information.

And why, he went on, had the Sontarans gone to such lengths to cover their tracks? Why, indeed, had they boarded the station? If they had simply wished to destroy it they could have aimed missiles from a million miles away.

Part of their intention, no doubt, had been to incriminate and traduce the Time Lords but he believed there was another underlying reason. 'A plot to kidnap me and probably Dastari as well,' he said. 'And that indicates the Sontarans were working with someone on the inside.'

'But why should they want to kidnap you – the other Doctor?' Peri asked.

'If I'm right they've taken Dastari, too,' the Doctor said,

'because he's about the only bio-geneticist in the galaxy who might be able to isolate a Time Lord's symbiotic nuclei.'

'So that's how you control the TARDIS? Symbiosis...'

'That's the genetic part of the equation,' he said, nodding. 'Kartz and Reimer had got their physics right but their machine would never work correctly without the genetic key. I believe somebody here realised what the missing element was and lured me into a trap. And they got the Sontarans to do the dirty work, probably on the promise of sharing the secrets of time travel with them.'

'But even if you're right, it doesn't really get us anywhere, does it?' Peri objected.

‘On the contrary, my girl.’ The Doctor got up from his chair and strolled over to a rest-bench set against the wall.

‘All we have to do now is find out where I’m being held.’

‘Oh, that’s all, is it?’ Jamie said. ‘They might have gone anywhere!’

‘Quite,’ said the Doctor, lying back on the bench. ‘But I made unconscious, telepathic contact with myself before –

during that mind-slip. So I ought to be able to do it again deliberately.’

Now that the awful threat of black doom had been lifted, he thought, anything seemed possible. He said,

‘While my mind is out of the body, don’t touch me. Don’t even come near me. Any kind of disturbance could sever the astral link and kill me.’

With that warning, he closed his eyes. ‘How long will it take?’ Peri asked.

‘Seconds, hours, perhaps even days,’ said the Doctor, his voice starting to fade. ‘Time doesn’t exist on the astral plane.’

Jamie gave Peri a nudge. ‘I think yours is worse than mine,’ he said in a whisper. She nodded, watching the Doctor. A quiver ran through his body and then he went rigid as he passed into a deep trance.

‘He’s not breathing,’ Jamie said.

‘He’s probably closed his respiratory tract again,’ she said. ‘I think he’s all right.’

Jamie sniffed the air. ‘Can you smell burning?’ he asked.

Peri looked around. There was a thin haze of smoke in the air. It seemed thickest by the computer. She ran over to it and saw that one of the power cables was smoking.

Before she could do anything it erupted into belching flame. Jamie had come to her aid and they tried desperately to stamp out the fire but it was already beyond control.

Strips of burning plastic began falling from the walls and roof, rapidly spreading the blaze to other parts of the room.

A fiery glob of the stuff fell on the rest-bunk by the Doctor’s feet. Jamie knocked it to the floor and stamped it out while Pen dealt with the smouldering mattress. But by now fiery debris was raining down all through the room which was filling with choking black smoke.

‘We’ve got to get him out of here!’ Pen shouted.

‘How? We canna wake him.’

‘If we don’t he’ll be burnt to death, anyway,’ she said, shaking the unconscious body. ‘Doctor, you must wake up!

Doctor!’

But there was no response from the Doctor. He lay rigid and unmoving. ‘Can we not move the pallet?’ Jamie suggested. ‘Let’s try...’

They heaved and pushed at the bunk but it remained solid against the wall. Peri looked underneath. ‘It’s clipped to the wall,’ she said, struggling with the heavy brackets retaining the two rear legs.

‘Out of the way, lassie,’ Jamie said. Drawing his skein dhu from his stocking, he crawled under the bunk and used the leverage of the blade to prise the clips open. Free of the wall, the bunk trundled easily. Choking in the foul smoke, they pushed it out of the blazing room into the walkway. Peri closed the entrance panel behind them.

‘How is he?’ Jamie asked, mopping his streaming eyes.

‘Better than we are, I think,’ said Peri, studying the unconscious Doctor. ‘He’s still not breathing.’

‘How is he?’ Chessene asked, studying the unconscious form of the other Doctor. He was lying on a surgical trolley in a cellar beneath the hacienda.

Dastari bent over him with a gleaming hypo-injector. ‘This will bring him round,’ he said.

Seconds after the powerful drug entered his bloodstream the Doctor’s eyelids flickered. Chessene and Dastari watched tensely. It was very quiet in the cellar – so quiet that a distant tintinnabulation, a faint, far-off carillon calling the faithful to worship, carried clearly on the still evening air.

The Doctor’s eyes opened and he stared blankly up at Dastari. ‘Jamie,’ he said thickly before his eyes closed again.

The Doctor’s eyes opened and he stared blankly up at Jamie. ‘Jamie,’ he said, closing his eyes again. ‘Boing,’ he said. ‘Boingg...’

Peri gave him an impatient shake. ‘Come on, Doctor!

Wake up.’

The Doctor struggled back to consciousness. He sat up, rubbing his face. ‘What’s happened?’ he said, looked dazedly around. ‘Where am I?’

Jamie said, ‘We had to move you.’

‘Move me? But I warned you –’

‘We had to get you out, Doctor,’ Peri said. ‘The computer caught fire.’

‘The computer? That’s impossible.’

Jamie pointed to the entrance panel behind them. ‘Look at that door. It’s buckling already.’

The Doctor swung his legs off the bunk. ‘Of course! My fault – I must have cut out the regulators and it’s overheated.’ He went over to the entrance panel. ‘We must turn off the oxygen vents. No fire without oxygen, you know.’

‘Doctor, it’s an inferno in there,’ Pen said warningly.

He touched the door and pulled his hand back sharply.

‘We’ve left it too late. Why didn’t you two think of turning off the oxygen? Why do you always leave everything to me?’

Such ingratitude was too much for Jamie. ‘We got you out!’ he said angrily.

The Doctor nodded. ‘Yes... Yes, thank you. Boingg...’

He scratched his nose. ‘Now where have I heard that before? I think it’s something to do with getting my hair cut.’

Peri shook his arm. ‘Look!’ A river of flame was starting to seep out into the walkway.

‘You’re right, Peri,’ he said. ‘I’ll think about it later.

Come on!’ And he set off at a run down the interminable length of the walkway. Peri and Jamie followed him and she was surprised to hear the Doctor appeared to be singing as he loped along.

‘Figaro, Figaro, Figaro!’ he burbled, heading for the kitchens of the space station and the TARDIS. Minutes later they were back sitting in the familiar console room and the Doctor was deep in concentration, drumming his fingers restlessly. Jamie had been sent off to clean himself up.

Suddenly the Doctor slapped his hand down in triumph. ‘I’ve got it!’ he said. ‘It was Santa Maria!’

‘What was?’ Peri asked.

‘Boinggg...’ said the Doctor. ‘It’s the largest bell of the twenty-five in the Cathedral at Seville. Very distinctive.’

‘So what does that mean?’

‘It means we know the area where they’re holding me –

him,’ he said excitedly. ‘It was in the distance, about three miles away, I would judge. Have you ever been to Seville, Peri?’

‘No,’ Peri said. ‘Have you?’

He was busily setting the controls but he spared her a glance. ‘How else would I know the Santa Maria when I hear it?’ he asked scathingly. ‘Do try to use your brain, my girl. Small though it is, the human brain can be quite effective when used properly.’

Peri directed a look at his back that should have drilled holes in it. ‘You might be wrong.’

‘I am not wrong,’ he said firmly. He looked round as Jamie entered. ‘Well, you look better for your bath. You should try one more often.’

Jamie shook his head sadly. He never could understand the Doctor’s ridiculous passion for soap and water. A dip in the burn twice a year was quite enough to keep the wee, creeping beasties at bay.

Peri said, ‘Ignore him, Jamie. He’s being crotchety.’

‘I’m not being crotchety. I’m... well, I’m concerned.’

‘What about?’ Jamie asked.

‘Myself. I mean him. Languishing in some dark dungeon at the mercy of the Sontarans.’

‘You can’t be sure he’s in a dungeon,’ Peri objected.

The Doctor nodded. ‘There was an echo,’ he said, ‘an after-resonance. If you’d been locked in as many dungeons as I have you couldn’t fail to recognise it. Are you ready?’

‘What for?’

‘Transference,’ said the Doctor, slamming the TARDIS

into motion. Peri managed to cling to the console but Jamie was flung backwards off his feet. He scrambled up to see the Doctor smiling at him thinly.

‘My Doctor wouldna’ have done that!’

‘Your Doctor is an antedeluvian fogey, Jamie – letting himself fall into the hands of the Sontarans! If anything happens to myself as a result, I’ll never forgive himself.’

Peri shook her head. ‘I wish you’d stop switching personal pronouns, Doctor. It would make it easier to know what you’re talking about.’

‘I know what I’m talking about and that’s all that matters,’ the Doctor said, effectively closing that conversation.

He began to think about the difficulties that faced them.

First, they had to find where his former self was being held. Three miles or so from Seville meant there would be an immense area to search. Probably he would have to try for another telepathic contact to glean more information.

And, of course, there wasn’t much time. From what he had observed at the space station that disaster had taken place nine or ten days ago. On the very edge of hyper-drive a Sontaran ship would take just about that length of time to reach Earth., So it seemed safe to assume that any operation that was planned to isolate the Time Lord’s symbiotic nuclei, while it may not yet have started, would not be long delayed.

Then, again, he had no idea yet of the strength of the opposition. There were the Sontarans to face, obviously, but who had been in secret affiance with them aboard the station?

It seemed unlikely that it would have been any of the scientists. That left only the Androgums. The thought of an alliance between Androgums and Sontarans sent a chill through him. Both races were the stuff of nightmares.

With the power of time travel they would pillage every civilised race. The Sontarans, of course, already had a very limited, primitive ability to move through time but they had always dreamed of obtaining the full mastery possessed by the Time Lords.

He became aware that someone was shaking his arm.

He looked round and saw Peri pointing to the central column. Its oscillating movement had stopped.

'Right,' he said. 'Out we go.'

Anita and Oscar, hurrying down the dusty lane, had seen the sudden emergence of the police box just a few seconds earlier. Oscar was still rooted in surprise.

'Well, isn't that incredible! Police!' he said. 'And they say they're never there when you need them.'

'Oscar, it doesn't say *Polizia*.'

'Interpol, my dear. They have branches everywhere.'

And he dashed off towards the three figures who had stepped from the box.

'Oscar, you are a fool,' Anita said fondly. She followed him, shaking her head. He really was the most bumbling, unworldly person she had ever met.

As she came up to the group he was saying in his orotund way, 'Officer, we have to report a tragedy. Stark disaster has struck this green and simple countryside.'

'Has it, indeed?' said the tallest of the three strangers.

'What manner of disaster, Mr –?'

'Botcherby,' Oscar said, with a bow. 'Oscar Botcherby at your service, sir. And this dark-eyed naiad is named Anita.'

'Oh, come on, Oscar!' Anita interrupted. 'There's been a plane crash.'

'Of course, it may not be your department,' Oscar said, eyeing Jamie's kilt and the bright clothes of the one he took to be the senior officer. 'I can see from your raiment that you obviously belong to the plainclothes branch.'

The Doctor exchanged a look with his companions.

'Did you see this aeroplane?'

Oscar shook his head. 'No, we were in an olive grove at the time it roared overhead. We were on a moth-hunting expedition. Are you interested in lepidoptera, at all?'

The Doctor smiled slightly. 'I am interested in everything. But mainly, at the moment, in this crash that you heard.'

Anita thought, the way Oscar was going, they would never get to the end of the story. 'It came down near Doña Arana's hacienda,' she said. 'We saw three survivors staggering towards the house.'

'Well, two of them were staggering,' Oscar corrected her.

'They were carrying some other poor injured fellow.'

He was pleased at the effect this snippet of information had on the senior detective. 'Were they indeed?' he said, running a hand through his blond curls and

studying Oscar thoughtfully. ‘Mr Botcherby, you may well have done me a great service.’

‘In what way, officer?’ Oscar inquired eagerly.

‘I think you saw three fugitives whose trail we have been following for some time. Perhaps you will lead us to this hacienda?’

‘Of course,’ said Anita. ‘It’s this way.’

Oscar stayed her. ‘Should we, my dear? It’s easy to find, officer. If you just follow this road –’

‘No, we ought to show them, Oscar! It’s not easy to find.’

‘I was thinking these men might be danger...’ Oscar said. ‘I mean I was thinking we ought to get back to the restaurant.’

Anita shook his hand away. ‘We’ve plenty of time.’

The senior officer smiled at Oscar understandingly.

‘You’ll be doing a public service, Mr Botcherby.’

‘Oh, well,’ Oscar said uncomfortably, ‘I must say the Botcherby family has never shirked from public service.

My dear, departed father was an air raid warden in Shepton Mallet throughout the war. He slept in a steel helmet for five years.’

The memory of his father’s gallantry stiffened Oscar’s own resolve. Besides, he was in the presence of three police officers who were, no doubt, armed to the teeth. He led the way back down the lane, chatting to the senior policeman, who seemed uncommonly knowledgeable, about his collection of moths. By the time they reached the boundary of the plantation he had quite forgotten why it was he had felt that sudden twinge of nervousness. Just like stage-fright. He began to tell his new friends about his career in the theatre.

# 7

**The Doctor's Dilemma**

There was a faint smell in the air: ancient, musty, fruity.

Cevitamic acid, almost certainly. Good old $C_6H_8O_6$ , he thought. He let the hydrocarbons linger fragrantly in his nasal membranes. It was the afternose of wine; the spillage from old casks, the drips from decanted bottles that down the centuries had seeped into shalling brickwork.

The hollow echoes that he could hear told him he was underground. So he was in a wine-cellar in a wine-growing region – but where? He lifted his hand an inch and allowed it to fall and decided that it had to be Earth. Despite being among the smaller of the populated planets, the Earth's density of mass meant that it had exceptionally high gravity.

Bellaphores, of course, was even denser but they made no wine there. They sucked, through colloidal membranes, a fermented slurry of clay and animal faeces. Not exactly one of his favourite planets in the whole wide universe. He had attended a banquet in honour of the Dominator once and been sick for days afterwards.

The Doctor kept his eyes firmly closed. Any information he could learn, while he was still thought to be unconscious, was likely to prove of value. He knew he was in a situation where he needed every fractional bit of advantage that he could gain.

He heard footsteps, shuffling into the cellar. Two of them, he deduced, were carrying something between them.

A gravelly voice said, 'That is the complete manifest.'

He risked a quick glance through slitted eyes and saw that the speaker was a Sontaran. He was with the massive Androgum from the space station, the one who had called himself Shockeye o' the Quawncing Grig. Chessene, the chatelaine, was also in the cellar and that, remembering the strangely appraising way she had stared at him, came as no surprise. But the fourth figure he had certainly never expected to see again alive. His old friend Dastari was standing next to Chessene, relaxed and at ease and apparently under no form of restraint.

'Where is Stike?' he heard Chessene say.

'The Group Marshal is placing the scout-ship in clear in order to conceal it from the local primitives.' That was the Sontaran.

'Even in clear it is still possible to detect with tracking equipment.' He recognised Dastari's voice. 'We should have chosen a less populous planet.'

Chessene said, 'According to the mind of the Doña Arana no-one comes here even though there is a city only four kilometres away.'

The Doña Arana, thought the Doctor. So they were in Spain.

'Are there any defence installations in the area?' Dastari asked.

'The Doña Arana knows nothing of that. There was very little in her mind to absorb.'

'Nor in her body,' said Shockeye's gruff voice. 'Nothing but bone and gristle.'

'I would have preferred somewhere completely deserted,' Dastari said. 'The operation is a delicate one. We cannot risk any interruption.'

'The Group Marshal favoured Earth,' Chessene said.

'His forces are planning an attack in the Madillon Cluster and this planet is within convenient range. And it was also Shockeye's wish to come here.'

‘And you indulged him? Why?’

Chessene smiled. ‘He has a craving to savour the flesh of these human creatures. As an Androgum myself I know the potency of such desires.’

‘You are no longer an Androgum, Chessene. I have raised you to a superior plane of life.’

Chessene shook her head. ‘There are blood-ties between the Franzine Grig and the Quawncing Grig. Shockeye does not yet know the full nature of my intentions. When he does learn the truth he is going to feel I have betrayed our Androgum inheritance.’

She looked along the cellar to where her compatriot was stalking something. Suddenly he pounced on a squealing rat and snapped its neck. He bit into the creature’s mangy fur, scabbed with old scar-tissue.

‘And he calls humans primitive!’ Dastari said.

‘All our chefs sample the raw flavours of ingredients before even heating their cooking pots.’

Shockeye held the dead rat up by its tail. ‘Does this have a name, Chessene?’

‘The Doña Arana knows it as rat. It is a scavenging creature.’

Shockeye pulled a face and tossed the rat aside. ‘The flesh is rank. Smoke-dried it might just be tolerable.’ He shambled off into the next cellar.

Chessene smiled. ‘He is utterly tireless in his quest for perfection,’ she said admiringly.

The Doctor decided he had played possum for long enough. He opened his eyes and looked up at Dastari.

‘Good morning,’ he said.

‘Don’t try to move yet, Doctor,’ Dastari warned him.‘You’ll feel dizzy for a time.’

‘What did you use? It feels like one of the anomode group.’

‘Absolutely right. Siralanomode.’

‘That affects the memory!’ the Doctor protested.

‘We’re not interested in your memory,’ Chessene said.

The Doctor eyed her coldly. ‘I can’t say that I care for the company you keep, Dastari.’

Suddenly Varl’s stentorian voice bawled from the door.

‘Attention! Group Marshall Stike of the Ninth Sontaran Attack Group!’

Stike came marching in, swagger stick under one arm.

‘Stand at ease,’ he said.

Chessene’s eyes smouldered. ‘We already were, Stike.

And tell that underling of yours not to shout every time you appear.’

Stike nodded. ‘Yes, Major Varl. The Androgum is quite right. I shall treat them as equals for the time being.’

‘Very good, sir.’

The Doctor looked around the cellar. ‘What have you done with my companion, Jamie?’

‘Your companion will be long since dead. The Sontarans take no prisoners,’ Chessene said.

The Group Marshal nodded. ‘Inflexible policy.’

The Doctor felt a wild surge of anger. But as he pulled himself up, intent on mayhem, Chessene grabbed his shoulders and Dastari pinioned his legs. He fought them grimly and silently until Shockeye arrived to make the one-sided struggle even more unequal.

'Fasten the restraints,' Chessene said.

'What was the cause of that disgusting outburst?' Stike asked.

'He had a sentimental attachment to his dead companion,' Chessene told him.

'To fall at the front of battle is a glorious fate,' the Sontaran said. 'But at the space station there was no glory.

We simply executed some snivelling prisoners.'

'You are a slimy obscenity,' said the Doctor levelly. He lay thinking. It would be wrong to abandon the hope that Jamie was alive. He had escaped that first surprise attack and the Doctor had a lot of faith in the young Scot's capacity for survival. It was quite possible that Jamie was still hiding out in the space station. Which made it all the more necessary for him to snatch the first chance of escape that came his way. He still had the recall button. One minute of freedom was all that he needed. He could whistle up the TARDIS and be on his way to Jamie's rescue.

Dastari brought in an ebonised cabinet. It had a glass door at the front and its rear panel was a gleaming complex of polished circuit boards. He saw the Doctor's look. 'The Kartz-Reimer transference module,' he said with a nod.

'Well, that'll never work,' the Doctor said disdainfully.

'I can tell that from here.'

'It worked well enough to bring you to the space station, Doctor.'

'All it did was to produce a few hiccups in the time continuum – enough to alert us to the fact that some dangerously crude experiments were going on.'

'Several Androgums successfully vanished into time during those experiments,' Dastari said. 'Unfortunately, we were unable to bring them back.'

'Of course you couldn't. Nobody can travel through time without access to a molecular stabilisation system.'

Chessene and the others had gone out while Dastari worked on the module. He was connecting up an external control system. He gave the Doctor a cunning look. 'We know that Time Lords possess a symbiotic link with their machines which protects against destabilisation,' he said.

'Guesswork,' the Doctor scoffed.

Dastari shook his head and waved a hand over the Doctor's body. 'It was Chessene who realised the missing element must lie somewhere in here.'

'So what do you intend to do – cut me up piece by piece?'

'Let us say cell by cell and gene by gene until I isolate the symbiotic nuclei.'

'When did you go mad, Dastari?'

'I assure you I'm not at all mad.'

'Are you hoping to give Chessene the power of time travel? Is that the idea?'

'I shall put her among the gods,' Dastari said. 'There need be no limit to her achievements.'

'There'll be no limit to her capacity for evil!' the Doctor said angrily. 'She's an Androgum whatever you say, Dastari, and she'll snap off the hand that feeds her any time she feels hungry.'

'You don't know Chessene.' Dastari made the final connection and straightened stiffly. 'I confess I was sad that the Time Lords chose you as their emissary because

I've always had a certain regard for you personally. And the operation will, of necessity, be painful. But you'll at least have the satisfaction of knowing you have been part of a great undertaking.'

He went out of the cellar. The Doctor tested the straps that were bound tightly round his torso and legs. No chance. Things, he thought, were looking black. He had hoped that he might have found some common ground with Dastari but the old fool was obviously besotted with his own handiwork. So there was no hope in that direction.

His thoughts were interrupted by voices from the next cellar. He heard Stike saying, 'Dastari, why this delay? I expected the operation to begin immediately upon my arrival. Time is being wasted.'

'Time is not being wasted,' Dastari said. 'An operation of this complexity needs careful preparation.'

'You are not efficient. All that should have been done.'

'We brought most of this equipment with us,' Dastari argued. 'How could it have been installed before we got here?'

'Chessene should have brought it. There was no forward planning.'

'If we had dismantled my operating theatre any earlier, the station would have been buzzing with speculation.

Chessene's plan would have been put at risk.'

The Sontaran grunted, unconvinced and unpacified.

'How long will this operation take?' he demanded.

'As long as it takes,' said Dastari blandly. 'Hours or days. I cannot say.'

'Every hour is precious to me,' Stike growled. 'My Ninth Group is forming up for a vital battle in the Madillon Cluster. It could change the course of the war. So it is imperative that I be there to lead them to victory!'

'Then if time is so important, Stike, I suggest you take this equipment to the operating theatre while I fetch the rest of what I need.'

The Doctor heard footsteps receding. You could tell Dastari's temper, he thought, by the sound of his heels. He looked round as Stike entered pushing an instrument trolley.

'Is it tea-time already, nurse?' he said.

Stike stared at him with yellow-rimmed eyes. 'I do not understand facetiousness.'

'Just as well,' the Doctor said. 'A face like yours isn't made for laughing.' It was a cheap gibe, perhaps, but why waste an expensive one on a Sontaran?

Stike said, 'The operation must begin soon. I am needed at the front.'

'Yes, I heard you ranting to Dastari about that. What was it – a vital strike in the Madillon Cluster? Dear me, nothing changes, does it? You and the Rutans have become fossilised in your attitudes.'

'Nothing can change until victory is achieved,' Stike said sententiously. 'But I fear I may have made a tactical error.'

'I thought you Sontarans never made mistakes.'

'It is not easy being a commander – the loneliness of supreme responsibility.'

'Then why don't you resign, Stike, and claim your pension?' said the Doctor lightly.

'When I die it will be alongside my comrades. One thing you and I have in common is that we do not fear death.'

The Doctor thought that was pitching it a bit high. ‘Oh, I don’t know...’

‘There is no fear in your eyes, Doctor.’

‘What’s this tactical error you think you’ve made?’

Stike shook his leathery skull regretfully. ‘I should have led my group in the Madillon strike before moving against the space station. Dastari cannot say how long this operation will take. I might miss the vital battle.’

‘I see your difficulty,’ the Doctor said.

‘So, Doctor, you have the glorious chance – in death – to help advance the Sontaran cause.’

Some hope, the Doctor thought, but he pretended interest. ‘How do I do that?’ he asked.

‘Tell Dastari where he will find the symbiotic nuclei within your cell structure,’ Stike suggested eagerly. ‘Vital time will be saved and I can be on my way.’

‘Is that what Chessene has offered you – the secret of time travel?’

The Group Marshal nodded. ‘In return for our co-operation at the space station.’

‘In that case you should watch your back,’ the Doctor said. ‘She’s an Androgum – a race to whom treachery is as natural as breathing. They’re a bit like you Sontarans in that respect.’

The blow was vicious. For a moment the Doctor felt as though his head had been detached from his shoulders. He had often wondered why the Sontarans had not developed something less clumsy than their two-digit, bifurcated hands. But they were obviously fearsomely effective weapons in close-combat, a factor that would be important enough in Sontaran eyes to outweigh any disadvantages.

Stike stared down at him, breathing heavily. ‘That is for the slur on my people,’ he said.

The Doctor glared back. ‘I demand satisfaction!’

‘You know that is impossible.’

‘I’m challenging you to a duel, Stike. That is the tradition among Sontarans, isn’t it?’

Stike hesitated. ‘It would give me pleasure to kill you,’

he said, ‘but unfortunately you are needed alive.’

He turned stiffly and started to walk away. ‘Untie me, Stike!’ the Doctor shouted. ‘Or are you not only without honour but a coward as well?’

For a moment he thought he had the Sontaran hooked.

Stike came to a halt and his heavy frame quivered with anger. The Doctor waited for him to turn, rehearsing the expression of contempt that he intended would snap the last of Stike’s self-restraint. He would look at him as though he was something soft and wet that had crawled out from under a garden shed. But Stike did not turn round.

Instead, he said in a shaking voice, ‘As you are not a Sontaran, Doctor, you cannot impugn my honour,’ and he walked on out of the cellar.

The Doctor sighed. It had been worth a try. Anything was worth trying when one faced the painful prospect of being sliced up millimetre by millimetre.

# Company of Madmen

Shadows thickened in the decaying loggia at the back of the house. The oppressive heat of the day had faded to a pleasant, languorous warmth. Bees, working the last hour of the day-shift, hummed drowsily in the flowers of the hibiscus tree under which Oscar Botcherby crouched.

It was an entrancing evening. Even the sun, still hanging low on the horizon, seemed reluctant to make its final bow. Oscar knew the feeling. There was always a sadness, an emptiness, as the curtain fell for the last time and the applause faded; time then to remove the cossie and the make-up and become an ordinary, boring person again in an ordinary, boring world.

He nudged the young policewoman beside him. 'I made a triumphant tour of your country once,' he said, 'in "The Way of the World". I suppose you did not have the good fortune to see me?'

'Alas,' said Peri, shaking her head.

'I was wonderful,' Oscar said modestly. 'The theatre critic of the *Boston Globe* wrote me the most glowing tribute. "Mr Botcherby's performance was quite monumental," he wrote.'

'Really?'

'Of course, being a critic, he added "in its ineptitude" –

but they have to do that to please their readers.'

Peri stifled a giggle. ' *That's* a glowing tribute?'

'My dear, you should have seen what he wrote about the rest of the cast – the poor, sacrificial lambs.'

'What are you acting in at the moment?'

'I am between roles at present so I'm managing a little restaurant for a friend of mine – La Piranella in the Arab Quarter.'

Anita, overhearing this, concealed a smile. Oscar had been running the restaurant for three years to her certain knowledge.

Suddenly Oscar jumped as though bitten. 'Oh, look!' he exclaimed. 'Over there.'

Peri tensed. 'I don't see anything.'

'Just there! An exquisite little feathered gothic. If only I'd brought my net...'

Jamie muttered something. It sounded like 'Haud ye weesht, mon.'

Peri thought they were all getting a bit on edge. It was several minutes since the Doctor had slipped off into the shrubbery, saying he wanted to survey the house at close quarters. There had been no sign of him since.

A light came on in one of the upper rooms. It was the first indication of any life at all inside the silent hacienda.

She wondered if the Doctor had seen it.

As it happened he had. He was working his way cautiously round the exterior of the house, listening for movements inside and trying to peer in through the blank, shuttered windows, when the light came on some twelve feet above his head. His instinctive reaction was to shrink back into the bushes under the wall.

Nothing further happened, however, and after a minute or so he straightened and stood staring up at the lighted window. A long time ago someone had nailed a trellis to the wall and its sagging quadrilaterals now provided precarious support for

an ancient, intertwined creeper. It looked far from safe but the Doctor had a burning desire to see into that window. He began to climb.

In the room above, Shockeye o' the Quawncing Grig was enjoying himself. He had found in a wardrobe a mouldering frockcoat and a high Spanish hat and was amusing himself by dressing as a human. Fortunately, the Don had been a huge man, weighing in his prime over three hundred pounds, and the coat – although giving at the seams in one or two places – survived as Shockeye struggled into it.

He jammed on the hat and chuckled at his reflection.

Grotesque. He began spreading the Doña Arana's talcum powder over his grey skin. As he did so he sang the touching little lullaby his mother had composed:

'Go to sleep my little grey lump of fun, You will grow up to be big and strong, Eating aught that comes along,

Smash the head and chomp the flesh

And sup the blood and crunch the bones, For all is grist to the Androgums...'

She had been a wizard with a skillet, the Quawncing Grig matriarch, but lacked taste as a versifier.

Poking further about the room, Shockeye came upon a spine-broken, illustrated cookbook. He had found several such books about the house. Despite the sinfully dilapidated state of the kitchen, it was obvious that someone there had once cared deeply about the preparation and consumption of food. Had he thought about it, the billowing size of Don Vincente's frockcoat might have led him to the same conclusion.

He was browsing through the book, taking particular note of the pictures, when Chessene entered. 'What do you have there, Shockeye?' she asked.

'A selection of recipes used by these humans,' he said.

'It's most interesting.'

'I can't think that Shockeye o' the Quawncing Grig has anything to learn from humans,' Chessene said with a smile. 'Do you understand it?'

Shockeye gave a shrug. 'The ingredients are unfamiliar, naturally, but the general principles are similar to my own methods. They cannot be quite as primitive as I believed.

In some ways they resemble us.'

'In what ways?'

'Complete carnivores, madam. There cannot be a creature on this planet that humans do not kill and eat.

Many types of beast they breed specially for the table, force-feeding them to improve the flesh and penning them in small, confined quarters to fatten more rapidly. And another interesting similarity –'

The Doctor could not quite hear what Shockeye was describing with such obvious enthusiasm but it was an interesting tableau that met his eyes, staring in through the lowest chink of the shutter.

The bloated figure in the frockcoat had his back to the window and, from the movements of his arms, was describing some technicality in fine detail to the well-built, dark-haired woman facing him.

That was all the Doctor had time to take in before he felt the trellis move under him and realised that it was slowly tearing away from the wall. In the same instant he saw that the woman was hurrying towards the window.

The Doctor let himself fall. He hit the ground with a shock that jarred his spine and rolled forward to hide in the shadow of the bushes beneath the window. He heard the grating of rusted hinges as the shutters above him were forced open. He held his breath.

'– various methods of killing,' said a deep, male voice.

'Some are suspended alive while their blood pumps out.

Others are carefully strangled so that their blood is retained. It depends on the type of meat that is required.

Crustaceans are plunged into boiling –'

The woman said, 'Be quiet, Shockeye. I heard something out here.'

'I heard nothing, madam.'

'You were too busy talking about your favourite subject,'

she said.

That made sense, thought the Doctor. The big male whose features he hadn't seen must be an Androgum. But in that case who and what was the female? He had already decided that he was facing an alliance between Sontarans and Androgums. Now it seemed that some third species must be involved.

A minute or two passed, slowly and in silence, and he lay unmoving, knowing that the big Androgum and his companion were standing at the window staring out with suspicious, searching eyes. Eventually, he heard the shutters creak as they were closed again and gave a sigh of relief. He let further time pass and then picked himself up and made his cautious way back in the welcome cover of the shrubbery.

Behind him, in the bedroom, Shockeye said, 'It may have been a bird, madam – small, flying creatures that are common on this planet. Many of them are baked together to make a dish called fieldfare pie.'

Chessene shook her head. 'I think we were being spied upon,' she said. 'Possibly some Tellurian saw us today and has become curious.'

'Oh, I do hope so!' Shockeye said. 'Though it is strange that I have found no recipes for cooking the human animal.'

'There are races that do not eat their own kind,' she reminded him.

'But a species that is at the top of the food-chain, as these creatures are, must develop the finest flavour of all, Chessene. They have the pick of the planet's resources and all that goodness is concentrated into the single species.'

He wiped his mouth, which was dribbling at the thought.

'Oh, I must have a Tellurian soon! A young one with a good proportion of meat to the bone. I am becoming insane for such a feast!'

Chessene smiled at him. 'Be patient, Shockeye. We'll find one for you before we leave Earth – indeed, I'll join you at table for I confess to a certain curiosity myself.'

Shockeye gazed at her. 'Oh, madam, then all is not lost for you!' he said feelingly. 'I'll prepare the beast with such care it will be a gustatory experience to savour for a thousand years!'

By this time the Doctor was back with his companions, scaring them as he came silently up behind them. 'Did you have to creep up like that?' Peri said angrily, her heart still racing.

'What did you expect – brass bands?' The Doctor leaned back thoughtfully against the trunk of the tree.

'Did you find out anything?' Jamie asked.

‘Not much,’ said the Doctor. ‘Anita, is the Doña Arana tall and dark with a broad, heavy forehead?’

‘No, she’s small and frail with white hair.’

‘Not her then. I couldn’t see the person she was with, his back was turned. He was dressed like a human but I don’t think he is one.’

Oscar gulped. ‘What do you mean – not human?’ he said in a faint voice.

‘My guess is that he’s an Androgum.’ The Doctor turned to Oscar. ‘That noise you heard was a spaceship landing, Mr Botcherby. And the hacienda is now in the possession of alien beings.’

‘You are joshing me, officer, aren’t you?’ Oscar said hopefully. But one look at the eyes of the senior policeman that the others called Doctor – presumably he had some medical qualification – told Oscar that whatever they were involved in was something very far from a joke. Cold fear knotted his stomach and he decided he was going to be sick.

Jamie said, ‘Doctor, I’ve just thought – this one with the broad forehead – was she wearing like a dark coathardie with a silver neck and cuffs?’

‘I couldn’t describe it any closer myself, Jamie.’

‘Then she was on the space station!’

‘Was she now?’

Jamie nodded eagerly. ‘Dastari said she was a – what was it? – an Androgum.’

‘Of course! Now you mention it – though her features hadn’t the heaviness of the typical Androgum.’

‘He said he’d done some operations that had turned her into a genius,’ Jamie told him.

‘What a stupid thing to do!’ the Doctor snapped.

‘That’s what the Doctor said.’

‘Well, I was right. Whatever he did for her mind her nature would remain the same – and Androgums have about as much emotional capacity as crocodiles.’

Oscar listened to this incredible conversation with the feeling that it couldn’t be happening. Not to him. It was all some terrible dream from which he would soon awaken to find himself tucked safely up in his nice, pink bed with dear little Teddy on the pillow beside him. And if it wasn’t a dream, he had fallen into the company of raving madmen.

The young policewoman said, ‘What’s the next move, Doctor?’

‘We have to find a way of getting into that house without being detected,’ said the senior madman thoughtfully.

Then to his horrified disbelief Oscar heard Anita, the mindless little fool, saying calmly, ‘I know a secret way into the cellars. It used to run from the old ice-house.’

‘The cellars? That’s even better!’ said the chief lunatic.

He sounded enthusiastic. ‘Peri, you’ll have to cause a distraction while Jamie and I try to find out where I’m being held.’

‘You’re doing it again, aren’t you?’ Peri said accusingly.

‘Doing what?’

‘Never mind. What sort of distraction?’

‘Do I have to think of everything?’ the Doctor asked peevishly. ‘Knock on the door and say you’re lost. Ask for directions, a glass of water, anything. Just keep them busy, all right?’

‘I don’t speak Spanish.’

‘Don’t worry, they’re not Spaniards.’ The Doctor smiled cheerfully.

Peri gave him a cold look. ‘And what do I do if a Sontaran answers the door?’

‘I don’t think that’s likely. For the moment they seem to be keeping well out of sight.’ The Doctor turned to Anita and said words that brought joy to Oscar’s heart. ‘Anita, after you’ve shown us the way to this ice-house I want you and Oscar to get away from this estate as quickly as possible.’

Oscar offered up a silent prayer of thanks. As a youngster he remembered seeing a film called *The War of the Worlds* and it had made an abiding impression on him.

Despite his father’s heroic service as an air raid warden, he had no wish to be death-rayed by something that looked like a metallic Daddy Longlegs.

It is doubtful, all the same, if Oscar would have preferred the appearance of Shockeye o’ the Quawncing Grig. The operation on the Doctor was about to start and Chessene had invited him down to watch but Shockeye had declined, preferring to remain in the bedroom. The sight of all those meat-juices, spurting wastefully out under Dastari’s knife, would have been too much to bear. As it was, the illustrations in the cookery book were whipping his appetite up to a frenzy.

He put the book down and went over to the window.

And then he could scarcely believe his luck. A young, female Tellurian was hesitantly crossing the courtyard towards the hacienda’s entrance.

Shockeye watched her through the louvres of the shutters. She was as pale-skinned and toothsome as any beast he had ever slaughtered; fine-boned but the flanks and buttocks of the little creature were well-packed with firm flesh.

He tried to estimate its weight. Scarcely a hundred pounds all-in, hide and hair together. But there would be little waste. And the Sontarans never ate food, relying for energy on power-charges from their ships taken in through their probic vents. As for Dastari, that dried-up old stick certainly had no interest in eating.

So he and Chessene would polish off the little thing between them! Shockeye gave a jig of unrestrained delight and then hurried downstairs to capture the animal.

Peri, unaware that her approach had been watched with such slavering anticipation, put a hand on the doorbell. On her way up to the hacienda she had worked out what she thought was a plausible cover story. Whether it would be believed or not was another matter. She took a deep breath.

The Doctor and Jamie should have reached the old ice-house by now. But perhaps she should wait just another minute to be sure...

Down in the cellar the final preparations for the operation had been completed. Watched by Chessene and the two Sontarans, Dastari adjusted a spotlight over the stainless steel operating table to which the Doctor was strapped.

He picked up a primed hypo-injector. ‘I’m afraid I’m unable to give you a full anaesthetic,’ he said conversationally, baring the Doctor’s forearm.

‘Doing the job on the cheap, are you?’ the Doctor said, with more bravado than he felt at that moment.

‘You have to be conscious while the neuron bombardment excites the brain cells,’ Dastari said. ‘I shall then be able to examine them.’

‘You should be examining your own brain cells, Dastari.

Most of them must have leaked out of your ears or you wouldn’t be involved in this madness!’

Dastari forced the hypo-injector home. ‘This is simply to inhibit the motor-centres and prevent movement,’ he said.

The Group Marshal snorted impatiently. ‘Get on with it, Dastari! You’re delaying my war effort!’

Dastari turned. ‘If you want this operation to succeed, Group Marshal,’ he said with asperity, ‘you will allow me to proceed as I decide and at the pace I consider appropriate.’

Stike rumbled angrily deep in his chest but said nothing further. Dastari turned back to the Doctor. ‘Count backwards from ten, Doctor.’

‘Certainly not.’

Dastari smiled thinly. ‘As you wish.’

The Doctor said indignantly, ‘Do you expect me to co-operate in my own... own... mmm... murder?’ Even to his own ears his voice sounded strange. ‘Im dongay ollik parl...’ he added. That was certainly telling them. His eyes closed.

Dastari leaned over him and tested the Doctor’s reflexes before unfastening the restraints. Working swiftly, but with practised precision, he lowered a neuron-ray tube over the table and adjusted it to an angle over the right lobe of the Doctor’s cereberal cortex.

When he was satisfied that he had the tube centred exactly on the area selected for bombardment, Dastari switched the machine on. There was a high-pitched, almost unbearable scream from the tube and then it turned into a regular, wailing rhythm like an effeminate air-raid siren. And with every screaming crescendo the Doctor’s face contorted as though burning needles were being driven into his central neural system.

After ten such neuron blasts Dastari turned off the machine. He picked up a small power-saw and set it humming.

‘The next step is partially to detach the occipital bone,’

he said, as though Chessene and the Sontarans were a medical class. Leaning forward, he brought the buzzing saw slowly and carefully down towards the base of the Doctor’s skull.

Then from somewhere above their heads, somewhere within the house, came a harsh unmelodic jangle. Chessene stiffened. ‘Wait!’ she said.

**9**

# A Song for Supper

The outbuilding to which Anita had brought them was in an even more derelict condition than the hacienda. Its sagging, peg-tiled roof looked in imminent danger of collapse. The Doctor pushed open the broken door.

'Now don't forget, Anita. I want you to collect Oscar and get away from here as fast as you can.'

'You're sure you don't want me to come with you?'

'Quite sure,' he said firmly.

'Well – good luck, then.' Her voice was tinged with regret. She had been enjoying the excitement of this unexpected adventure.

'Goodbye, Anita,' Jamie said. She gave him a warm smile and a little wave and began picking her way back through the tangled undergrowth. He stood watching her.

Now there was a lassie, he thought, that if things had been different...

The Doctor's voice, from inside the shed, brought him back to reality. 'Come along, Jamie!' he called. 'No time for mooning.'

Jamie sighed and stepped forward into the fusty gloom.

Old agricultural implements littered the stone floor, ancient bits of saddlery and tackle hung from the cobwebbed walls and in one corner a sunken pile of sacks, once containing animal feed, testified to the ravages of rats and mice over the years.

The Doctor had already prised open a wooden trapdoor set in the floor and was carefully lowering himself through the hole.

'Mind how you go, Jamie,' he said. 'This ladder feels –'

There was a sudden splintering sound and the Doctor disappeared with a yelp of dismay. Jamie peered down into the hatch. 'A bit rickety – is that what you were going to say, Doctor?'

The Doctor picked himself up, ruefully rubbing his knee. Twice in one day was too much, he thought. 'Just get yourself down here!' he said sharply.

He looked round. He was in a narrow passage with a vaulted roof. Scoring on its brick floor showed where, in times past, solid blocks of ice had been dragged along to the cellars where they would have been broken into pieces and taken up to the house.

Thinking of the house he thought of Peri and began to regret his impetuosity. Sending her forward as a distraction had seemed a bold manoeuvre at the time, a direct stroke that the opposition could never have anticipated. A lot depended on how well Peri carried off her role. It was possible that he had placed the child in the gravest peril.

The thought tightened his throat. 'Come on, Jamie,' he said, and led the way down the passage.

Peri, at that time, felt she was doing pretty damn' good.

She was standing in the hall of the hacienda talking to this tall dame in the long gown and acting, she thought, a whole heap better than Oscar Botcherby had ever done.

'American students?' the woman said.

Peri nodded. 'Yes, we're planning to send parties every year and are surveying the district for suitable accommodation. Can I ask, do you live here alone or are there other occupants?'

The woman was eyeing her with a strange, glittering intensity that she found disconcerting. For a moment, Peri thought she had not heard the question. Then she said, 'I live here alone.'

A shuffling of feet made them both look round. The huge, frockcoated figure of Shockeye was lurking at the foot of the stairs, a gluttonous expression on his face as he stared at Peri.

'Apart from my servant,' the woman added. 'Wait here a moment.'

Beckoning Shockeye to follow her, she went out into the cellar passage. Shockeye plucked pleadingly at her sleeve.

'We could have it tonight, madam,' he said. 'I could make a piquant sauce –'

'Perhaps we shall,' Chessene said. 'But first I must test my suspicions.'

'What suspicions?'

'The human mind is so flabby and vague that it is hard to penetrate,' Chessene admitted. 'But it was constantly thinking of the Doctor... the Doctor.'

'How is that possible?' Shockeye said. 'It can have no knowledge of the Doctor.'

Chessene shrugged. 'We will see. Have Dastari bring him through the hall. If there is a connection it will give itself away when it sees him.'

'And then we can cook it?' Shockeye said, smiling eagerly. 'Very good, madam.'

He shambled off hurriedly to the cellars and explained to Dastari the new development and what Chessene expected of him. Group Marshal Stike listened to him with growing anger. The prospect of a further delay was quite intolerable.

Stike took his gun from its holster and moved closer to the operating table. 'Ignore Chessene,' he said. 'Get on with the operation.'

Shockeye glared at him. 'Madam's orders were quite clear,' he said.

Stike pointed the gun at Dastari. 'And my orders are that you continue the operation!'

Dastari gave him a contemptuous look. 'Force will get you nowhere, Stike. If you kill me you will lose forever all chance of learning the Time Lord's genetic secret.'

There was a long pause during which Dastari knew his life hung in the balance. Then Stike slowly returned his gun to its holster. 'Very well,' he said. 'But tell Chessene if this operation is not completed by the end of the day I shall return to my unit, anyway – and I shall leave none of you alive behind me... Come, Major Varl.'

The two Sontarans stalked out. 'Militaristic buffoon!'

said Dastari, glaring.

'Chessene will deal with him,' Shockeye said confidently. 'Have you ever eaten a Sontaran?'

'Certainly not!' Dastari looked shocked at the thought.

'Shouldn't bother,' Shockeye advised him. 'The flesh is tasteless.'

Between them, they lifted the unconscious Doctor into a wheelchair and covered his legs with a blanket. His head nodded forward and he looked very much the infirm, chairbound invalid as they wheeled him through the next cellar towards the steps.

Jamie and the other Doctor watched the little procession from behind the cover of a stack of barrels. Knowing his companion's temperament, the Doctor placed a restraining hand on the young Scot's shoulder.

'Aren't we going after them?' Jamie whispered.

'Let's look around first.'

'But there's only two of them! We could –'

‘One of them is an Androgum, Jamie. He’d break us both in half with one hand. As for the other –’

‘Dastari’d be nae bother,’ Jamie said.

The Doctor shook his head firmly. ‘Even Dastari might surprise you. He was a champion sampola wrestler in his younger days. In any case,’ he added, ‘it looks as though I’m under an anaesthetic at the moment so I’m not in any state to help me, is he?’

Straightening up, he led the way into the next cellar.

Jamie followed, still trying vainly to work out the convolutions of the last sentence...

Up in the hall above them, Peri was gamely continuing with her pretence. But she was rapidly running out of questions to ask this stern-faced woman who was studying her with what seemed to be an increasingly hostile expression.

‘And how many bedrooms are available?’ Peri said.

‘Seventeen,’ the woman replied indifferently.

Peri pretended to make a note while her mind raced desperately, searching for another seemingly pertinent question. How long was she supposed to keep this up?

Surely the Doctor had finished in the cellars by now?

The door to the cellar passage opened and a grey-haired man pushed in a figure in a wheelchair. The man in the wheelchair, tucked in a blanket, looked to be asleep.

Behind them loomed the ugly colossus that the dark-haired woman had claimed was her servant. Peri did not like the way he was staring at her.

‘I thought you lived alone here?’ Peri said.

‘Visitors,’ the woman said, still watching Peri with that intensely discomfiting scrutiny. A flicker of disappointment crossed her face and she waved to the grey-haired wheelchair pusher. ‘Take him to his room,’ she said brusquely.

The older man nodded and wheeled the chair out. ‘Is he all right?’ Peri asked. The invalid in the chair had looked very ill.

‘He has had a tiring time recently,’ the woman said, turning away.

‘Madam,’ said the big manservant, making signs to attract the attention of his mistress. There was an imploring, greedy look on his face.

‘Oh, yes,’ said Chessene, with a slight smile. ‘Show this young woman round, Shockeye. She might be particularly interested in the kitchens.’

It seemed an innocent enough remark but Peri scented a whiff of danger. ‘Thank you, but I have all the information I need,’ she said, turning towards the door.

‘Come,’ said the servant called Shockeye. He advanced with a leering grin on his face and his great hand reached out towards Peri.

She felt a shock of real fear. ‘Sorry. My friends are waiting for me,’ she said quickly and, dodging the outstretched hand, darted out through the door.

Shockeye, with a rumble of disappointment, started to follow but Chessene stopped him. ‘If it has friends they will come enquiring after it,’ she said.

‘I think that was a lie,’ Shockeye said. He had smelt Peri’s fear. He had a long experience of butchering animals and even the most docile had to be dragged through the doors of the abattoir. Some instinct seemed to tell them that their time was at an end. And the little Tellurian’s reaction had run exactly true to form. It *knew*, he thought.

He waited until Chessene had left the room and then went out on to the steps of the portico. The young human was hurrying away across the courtyard. It glanced

nervously back and saw him standing on the steps and then immediately broke into a run. Shockeye gave a gleeful chortle and took off in pursuit of the fleeing animal. He enjoyed the hunt almost as much as he relished its savoury product after the kill.

Peri's mistake was to leave the track down which she was fleeing. It had once been a wide gravel drive down which the Don and Dona had swept in their yellow-painted Hispano-Suiza. And even now, although overgrown, it offered a reasonably easy pathway.

Had she stayed on the old driveway she might have had some hope of outdistancing Shockeye. But, seeing him thundering along behind her, she plunged off into the tangled underbrush of the plantation, thinking that she would find safety in the thick shelter of the trees.

However, the whipping branches and snagging vegetation immediately slowed her progress. She had to force her way forward through the dense undergrowth and every yard was a struggle. Behind her she could hear Shockeye coming on as steadily as a steamroller.

Peri plunged on despairingly with a sick sense of horror at what the foulness behind her might intend. Her lungs ached and her heart felt as though it was about to burst but she staggered grimly on, her limbs moving now like those of a cross-Channel swimmer finally touching down on French sand.

Then she caught a foot in a protruding root and fell headlong. When she pulled herself up, Shockeye was standing over her, grinning happily.

'Pretty-pretty...' he said, holding out a coaxing hand.

'Here, my pretty one.'

Although she knew there was no hope, Peri made a feeble attempt to duck under his arm but he caught her in a grip that could have hoisted car-bodies off a production line. With his other hand he gave her a playful cuff over the head and knocked her senseless.

Swinging the limp, luscious body over his shoulder, Shockeye turned and retraced his steps. They would feast tonight, if ever they had. The rump under his hand felt exquisitely tender. The prime cut, he thought. He would bone and roll the saddle, with an appropriate stuffing.

With the hindlegs and forelegs he would make a stew. Or serve them braised. The head, skinned and split into quarters, together with the offal, could be rendered down for stock. Or even a savoury soup with noodles.

There were really no limits, he thought blithely, to the possibilities available with a fine beast such as this, Of course, given the choice, he would have preferred a jack.

There was generally less fat on a jack. However, this little jill was in perfect condition and he had no doubt that he could turn it into such a meal that even Chessene o' the Franzine Grig would be forced to admit her hereticism.

Tramping back to the hacienda, Shockeye – as was his repulsive habit when especially pleased with life – raised cheerful tongue. It was a little ditty of his own composition:

'Some sing in praise of the jaffa-beast, And the six-leg'd corcorant is sweet.
The juiceous geldeek has golden skin
And needs quite a lot of basting.

Yet naught compares with a Tellurian –
Yes, my lads, a Tellurian –

Cooked for three hours in a Tandoori oven.'

Shockeye might have inherited his mother's love of music but he hadn't, as yet, acquired her sublime skill with words. Nevertheless, he was pleased with his achievement.

With its catchy jingle and heart-warming sentiments it might well become the Androgum national anthem.

While Shockeye concentrated on the next stanza, the only two people who might have been able to help Peri were themselves in a scarcely less enviable predicament.

One glance at the equipment that had been assembled in the cellar was enough to assure the Doctor that his conjecture about the reason for the kidnapping of his other self had been correct. But, of course, his deductive skills were unfailingly accurate. In fact, he thought, looking round the cellar, with his intellect the very term

'conjecture' – implying a theory awaiting proof – was quite superfluous. Once he applied his mind to a problem there no longer was a problem.

Turning away from the operating table, he studied the Kartz-Reimer module. It was a brilliantly conceived machine. Some of its circuitry was of better design and more advanced than that in his TARDIS.

He shook his head with grudging admiration. 'They've got it almost exactly right,' he told Jamie. 'Even down to the briode-nebuliser, look.'

'What is it?' Jamie asked. All he could see was a black box with some, like, wee pomander-caskets stuck on the back.

'It's the Kartz-Reimer version of a TARDIS,' the Doctor said.

'Does it work?' Jamie said, and wondered at the sudden sharpness he saw cross the Doctor's face.

'It would if I used it – or any Time Lord. But not for anyone else.'

'Why not, Doctor?'

'These machines have to be primed,' the Doctor explained. 'We call it the Rassilon Imprimature – that's a sort of symbiotic print within the physiology of Time Lords. But once that's absorbed into the briode-nebuliser you have a time machine anyone can use. Of course, that's the bit they didn't understand. They've simply copied the technology without realising that old Rassilon had a second trick up his sleeve.'

And it was then that a deep voice behind them said, 'A most interesting lecture, Doctor.'

The Doctor gave a gasp of surprise and whirled round.

Two Sontarans stood in the cellar entrance, guns drawn and pointing unwaveringly. The one who had spoken motioned to them to raise their hands and advanced further into the cellar.

He said, 'Major Varl, inform Chessene that we have another Time Lord in our collection.'

Varl clicked his heels together. 'Yes, sir.' He made a smart about-turn and left.

The Sontaran said, 'I am Group Marshal Stike, Commander of the Ninth Battle Group.'

'A long way from the war, aren't you, Stike?' the Doctor said calmly. 'Going badly, is it?'

'Quite the contrary,' Stike said. 'And thanks to the information you've just given me, I shall be back with my unit in time for the crucial battle.'

‘My money’s still on the Rutans, Stike.’

The Sontaran’s eyes glinted dangerously but he kept the thin smile on his brutal face. He said, ‘I heard the human call you “Doctor”. Why do you Time Lords give yourselves these absurd titles?’

‘Keeping up with you, Group Marshal. You know, I’ve never met a Sontaran private yet?’

‘The Sontaran private is the best fighting soldier in the universe,’ Stike said proudly. ‘Loyal, courageous, disciplined, obedient –’

‘Thick.’

Stike nodded. ‘Thick,’ he agreed, and then scowled angrily as he realised what he had said. He jabbed his gun savagely into the Doctor’s ribs. ‘Get into the machine, Time Lord!’

‘Why? Oh, of course!’ The Doctor shook his head wonderingly. ‘Do you really expect me to give this machine the Rassilon Imprimature?’

Stike took a quick step sideways and his powerful arm hooked Jamie round the neck. He dragged the young Scot backwards, holding his gun threateningly against Jamie’s temple.

‘Do it or your comrade dies!’ he snarled. ‘And then you’ll be put in the machine anyway.’

The Doctor stared helplessly. There was no doubt Stike had the upper hand; no doubt, too, that he meant every word he said. He gave a shrug of defeat.

‘You leave me little choice, Stike. But you’ll harm my companion at your peril.’

It was an empty threat and Stike knew it. He sneered triumphantly and pointed to the Kartz-Reimer module again. ‘Get in!’

The Doctor, head bowed in resignation, slowly and reluctantly entered the kiosk. He stood looking out through the glass panel. Stike, still keeping a fierce grip on Jamie, tapped the external control switch with the muzzle of his gun. The kiosk emitted a sudden howl of sound, similar to but fainter than that of the TARDIS, and vanished. Seconds passed and then the sound came again and the kiosk re-appeared. The Doctor stepped out.

‘Satisfied?’ he said coldly.

‘So the machine is now primed?’ Stike said.

‘Yes.’

‘Excellent, Doctor.’ The Group Marshal leered and brought his gun back up to Jamie’s head. ‘I shall now execute your comrade.’

The Doctor watched Jamie’s right hand. ‘That’s why you Sontarans have no allies,’ he said. ‘You can’t be trusted.’

‘We have no need of allies,’ Stike said contemptuously.

‘Sontaran might is invincible.’

Jamie’s fingers closed round the handle of his skein dhu and he snatched it up and backwards, driving the blade deep into the Sontaran’s right thigh. Stike gave a cry of pain and then the Doctor was on him, bending back his gun-arm. For a second or so the three of them were locked in a staggering struggle and then the gun fell from Stike’s hand. He followed it, tripping backwards and crashing heavily to the ground.

‘Run, Jamie!’ the Doctor panted.

Jamie needed no urging and raced from the cellar, the Doctor close on his heels. Behind them they heard a roar of anger as Stike scrabbled for his gun.

In a matter of moments he was in hot pursuit, ignoring the pain of his injured leg. His pride had suffered the greater injury and would only be assuaged when he had the corpses of the Doctor and Jamie to gloat over.

Stike hit the next cellar at a run and skidded to a halt, eyes searching every corner. They had not had time to reach the steps. They had dived into hiding somewhere here. But the skulking cowards could not escape him.

He directed a burst of fire at the pile of barrels, splintering them to matchwood. He sent another fusillade of shots into the darkest, furthest corner. No bodies fell out. Stike whirled round, his gun set on automatic, and sprayed bullets across every foot of the cellar. The Skeeling hand-gun he was using was one of the latest pieces of weaponry in the Sontaran armed forces; it was accurate to three hundred metres and stored four hundred rounds in a six-inch magazine clip. Not until the hammer clicked against an empty magazine did Stike lower the gun. He stood panting, breathing the brick dust his assault had scoured out of the walls.

Unbelievably, the two fugitives seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

**10**

# Shockeye the Donor

The effects of the drug were dissipating. Movement returned to his eyes first and, moving them, the Doctor focussed on his left hand which was resting on the arm of the chair. He lifted a finger. Only a fraction of an inch but he felt a glow of triumph; after the glacial immobility in which he had been frozen for so long the smallest movement was a giant victory.

They were moving him again, Dastari and Chessene, pushing his wheelchair back to the horror of the operating theatre. A door slammed somewhere and a distant Sontaran voice said, 'Chessene!'

The wheelchair stopped moving and he heard Chessene turn. 'What is it, Varl?'

Crisp, military footsteps came nearer. Varl said, 'The Group Marshal wishes me to tell you he has captured a second Time Lord and an Earthling.'

'A *second* Time Lord?' The Doctor could hear the disbelief in her voice.

Suddenly there was a prolonged burst of firing from somewhere close at hand. It sounded like quite a gun-fight.

'Come!' Chessene said.

The Doctor lifted his eyes enough to see Chessene, followed by Dastari and Varl, hurrying towards the cellar entrance. Firing was still continuing. He began moving his hand against the arm of the chair, trying to force life back into his paralysed muscles, while he thought about what Varl had said.

Could it be that the Time Lords had traced him here and were mounting a rescue operation? But that would have required an order in High Council and somehow he could not believe he was thought that important; in fact, he had very clear evidence that they considered him expendable. But there was one possibility. The Sontarans had gone to elaborate lengths to make it appear that the Time Lords were responsible for the massacre at the space station. If the other Third Zone governments had swallowed that and rounded on Gallifrey, might not the Time Lords – jolted out of their inertia, for once – have been forced to prove what really happened?

The firing from below stairs had stopped now. The Doctor wondered what the outcome had been: in any battle between Sontarans and Time Lords he would have to give long odds against his own side. It had been many thousands of years since they'd had any practice...

The firing, of course, had stopped simply because Stike had run out of ammunition – although the Doctor was not to know that. The Sontaran fitted a new clip into his Skeeling and looked balefully across the cellar at Chessene.

'I tell you one was here,' he said. 'I found him examining the Time Module.'

Chessene glanced at Dastari. 'How could the Time Lords have traced us?' she asked. 'If this is some kind of trick, Stike –'

'It is the truth. I did not do this to myself,' Stike said, pointing to the haft of Jamie's dagger which still projected from his leg.

Dastari's eyes widened. 'The Doctor's companion at the Space Station had such a weapon, Chessene! The same carved bone handle.'

Varl spoke to his Group Marshal: 'They must still be down here, sir. We passed nobody.'

'Then this warren must have another exit,' Stike snarled. 'Search for it. Waste no more time.'

Chessene nodded to Dastari and they spread out, quartering the cellar methodically. It was Dastari who found the secret exit, concealed behind a wine rack on castors.

'Over here!' he called.

Stike, his Skeeling levelled, led the way into the passage.

And, at that exact moment, the Doctor was helping Jamie out of the trapdoor at the further end. He closed the trap and looked around for something heavy. An old, broken water-trough caught his eye.

'Help me with this,' he said.

Between them, grunting with effort, they dragged the heavy trough across the wooden door of the trap. It was hardly in position when they heard sounds in the passage below. They left the outbuilding as someone underneath began heaving to raise the trapdoor.

'While they're busy down there we've got a chance to get me – him – out,' the Doctor said, and sped off towards the hacienda with Jamie hard on his heels.

The Doctor stopped as he reached the steps, motioning to Jamie for silence, and then went up them with cat-like caution. The door was ajar and the Doctor eased it carefully open and slipped inside.

He looked at himself in the wheelchair.

'Doctor!' Jamie said, staring.

The figure in the wheelchair looked across at them. His head was making small, palsied movements as though he did not have full control over his muscles.

'Ah, there you are, Jamie!' he said hoarsely. He gave a little smile and then his eyes turned to the other Doctor and the expression in them was almost hostile.

The two Doctors looked at each other coldly for a full two seconds. 'I've come a long way for you,' said the one accusingly.

'Don't expect gratitude. Whatever happens to me ultimately affects you.'

'Can you walk?'

The Doctor shook his tremulous head. 'Not yet. My liver is trying to neutralise ten milliletres of ethelene-trisorbin.'

'I saw the vial,' said the Doctor.

Jamie heard footsteps, heavy footsteps, crunching across the courtyard gravel. 'Someone's coming!' he warned.

But the Doctor had already heard. He pointed to a heavy, carved chest against the wall. 'Behind there!'

They dived for cover and probably squashed a dozen spiders as they flattened themselves in the dusty space behind the chest. Shockeye o' the Quawncing Grig, with Peri still hanging limply from one shoulder, stamped into the hall.

He, went across towards the baize-covered kitchen door, pausing only to bestow a cheerful pat on the Doctor's head.

'Wake up, old Time Lord,' he said genially. 'Supper will soon be served.'

Chuckling to himself, Shockeye carried his burden on into the kitchen. The door closed behind him. Jamie nudged the Doctor. 'Did you see that?'

The Doctor nodded grimly. He got to his feet, his mind racing. Somehow, in the next minute or so, they had to create a diversion. They had to distract Shockeye's attention away from his victim. But how? For once in his life he was at a loss for any

gleam of inspiration, any kind of feasible plan. An Androgum bent on slaughter was as intractable as an army tank.

A direct confrontation with the alien would be suicidal madness. But it looked to be the only chance. He took a half-step towards the kitchen and then heard voices behind him, outside the hacienda, and dived back behind the chest again.

Chessene and the others had finally forced their way out through the trapdoor. They stood in the courtyard, looking around. 'He'll come back,' Chessene said confidently. 'He has to. Dastari, you come with me. Stike, take Varl and search the area.'

She went towards the steps of the hacienda. Stike stared after her, his expression venomous. 'That Androgum has given its last order!' he hissed.

Varl looked at his superior questioningly. 'Sir?'

Stike said, 'I have outwitted Chessene. The Time Module is now fully operational, Major Varl, so you and I can return to our unit.'

Anyone, other than a Sontaran in the presence of his Group Marshal, might have been forgiven for asking exactly how Stike had obtained a functioning Time Module. Varl, however, accepted the statement without query.

'Excellent news, sir.'

Stike turned on his heel. 'Come.' He set off across the courtyard.

Inside the hacienda, Dastari was concluding his examination of the Doctor, who had felt it wise to feign complete unconsciousness. 'His neural centres are still inoperative,' Dastari said with satisfaction. 'I was afraid we might have to postpone the operation.'

'Postpone it?' Chessene said. 'Why?'

'To allow him time to make a full recovery,' Dastari explained. 'If I gave him a second injection this soon after the first, the shock would kill him.'

Chessene shook her head. 'Now the Time Lords have located us, we must move quickly, Dastari.'

'The operation cannot be hurried.'

'I'm aware of that,' she said. 'But I have a contingency plan. It's been in my mind for some time.'

Dastari looked at her blankly. 'What contingency plan?'

'To turn this Time Lord into an Androgum,' she said triumphantly. 'You could do that, I know.'

'Well... if I had the genetic material.'

'Take it from Shockeye,' Chessene said.

'Shockeye?' Dastari looked incredulous. 'What's your intention, Chessene?'

'I want you to make a consort for me,' she said. 'A consort with the power of time travel. Leave the symbiotic nuclei within him but turn him into an Androgum by blood and instinct. How long would that take?'

'Not long,' Dastari admitted. 'It would require only two simple operations, the first for the genetic implant and then a second to stabilise his condition.'

Chessene nodded. 'Good. Then that is what we must do.

I will get Shockeye.'

'I don't think he'll co-operate,' Dastari said. 'He has firm views on racial purity.'

Chessene smiled coldly and went towards the kitchen.

‘He won’t get the chance to argue.’

She pushed open the green baize door. The whistling susurration of a blade on steel reached the straining ears of both Doctors. Shockeye was sharpening a knife.

Chessene looked at Peri’s motionless form lying on a cutting bench. ‘I see you caught it.’

‘Of course,’ Shockeye said.

‘I want you to help Dastari get the Doctor back to the operating theatre.’

‘Can’t I trim this beast first, madam?’ Shockeye said pleadingly. ‘It will only take a few minutes.’

Chessene made an impatient gesture. ‘Later, Shockeye.

Dastari wants to operate immedately.’

Shockeye sighed. He sheathed the knife back into his belt with a shrug of disappointment. ‘If you say so,’ he said heavily. He went out into the hall. Chessene took out her hand-gun and turned its blast-regulator from ‘kill’ to

‘stun’, and then followed.

From behind the chest the Doctor and Jamie watched the chairbound Doctor being wheeled out into the cellar-passage, Chessene bringing up the rear. No sooner had the door closed behind them than the Doctor was on his feet.

He ran into the kitchen and bent over the unconscious Peri.

‘Is she all right?’ Jamie asked anxiously.

The Doctor nodded with relief. ‘She will be. She’s only stunned.’ He lifted the slight body off the bench and on to his shoulder. ‘Let’s go!’

With Jamie acting as forward scout, they hurried out of the hacienda and ran for the cover of the trees. The Doctor, panting from his exertions, laid Peri down. She was, he noticed, showing signs of coming round.

‘What now?’ Jamie asked. ‘They’ve still got the Doctor.’

‘And they’re turning us into an Androgum,’ the Doctor said gloomily.

‘How long will that take?’

‘You heard Dastari. Just two operations... I thought Stike would have acted by now. It doesn’t usually take Sontarans this long to double-cross someone.’

‘What do you mean?’ Jamie said.

A slight grin appeared on the Doctor’s face. ‘I mean Stike thinks he has a functioning time machine. He won’t have told Chessene, of course, because he’ll be hoping to steal it for the Sontarans. And I would expect him to try to kill both her and Dastari before he leaves.’ He paused to scratch his nose thoughtfully. ‘In the confusion we might get a chance to rescue me. So why isn’t my plan working?

Is there something I’ve overlooked?’

Jamie looked mystified. ‘Your plan?’ he said.

‘Exactly, Jamie. You don’t think someone of Stike’s build can sneak up behind me without my hearing him, do you?’

Jamie remembered the sudden sharpness on the Doctor’s face as he had stood studying the module. ‘You mean you knew he was behind us?’

‘That’s why I said what I did. None of it was strictly true.’ The Doctor grinned again, pleased with his deception. ‘In fact, most of it was entirely untrue. But Stike believed it because I was talking to you.’

‘But the machine worked!’ Jamie protested. ‘I saw it.’

‘Oh, yes, it worked for me. But it won’t work for him because I’ve got the briode-nebuliser.’ He produced it triumphantly from his pocket and his grin grew even wider.

‘If he tries to operate that machine without this the results should be worth seeing. The Sontarans will have a vacancy for a Group Marshal.’

While the Doctor explained this to Jamie, the double-cross he had expected was being planned – and not only by the Sontarans.

After some thought, the Group Marshal ordered his subordinate to return to their craft with a message, coded Most Secret, for the Sontaran High Command.

‘Report that we have possession of a functioning time-space machine,’ he told Varl in his clipped military fashion. ‘Request permission to use the machine to rejoin our unit in the Madillon Cluster. Suggest that after the battle the machine can be placed at the disposal of our technical support staff. Is that clear?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Wait for acknowledgment, then set the craft for self-destruction,’ Stike continued. ‘I intend to leave no-one alive here, so bring two mezon-blasters from the armoury.’

‘Mezon-blasters, sir?’ Varl looked at the Group Marshal.

‘But they are our heaviest calibre –’

‘I know,’ Stike said, his mouth twisting in what might have been taken for a smile. ‘But if a job is worth doing it is worth doing well, Major Varl.’

‘Very good, sir.’ Varl clicked his heels and marched off round the house to where the Sontaran ship was berthed among the trees.

While Varl carried out his orders, and then sat waiting for the High Command to acknowledge his message, Chessene watched Dastari operating on the Doctor. At the last moment he had come very close to ruining her plan. He must have been conscious, she thought, slyly listening to their conversation in the hall, because just as Shockeye and Dastari were placing him on the operating table he had opened his eyes and stared up.

‘You know what this precious pair have planned for you, Shockeye?’ he said.

‘What?’

‘Enough!’ Dastari said.

Shockeye, suspicions roused, began to turn and Chessene fired a stun-bolt into his head. The Androgum’s huge bulk toppled slowly forward, like a falling tree, and lay unconscious.

‘How much lower can you sink, Dastari?’ the Doctor said contemptuously. ‘You plan to turn me into that!’

‘Oh, no, Doctor – nothing so clean and simple.’

Chessene smiled at him with mocking malice. ‘You will be my little hybrid creature. A once-proud Time Lord grovelling at the feet of Chessene o’ the Franzine Grig! An amusing thought, isn’t it? Even Shockeye will come to see the irony... eventually.’

They were the last words the Doctor heard before Dastari anaesthetised him. Now he was lying, just as Shockeye was, connected to the genetic-tissue-transferer.

Shining flexible lines coiling out of the machine were connected to their foreheads, chests and arms. Dastari made a final, careful adjustment to the power-dial and switched the machine on. There was a low hum of energy and the coiling lines began to vibrate. Chessene saw the Doctor’s body stiffen as the genetic force flowed into him.

‘How long?’ she said.

Dastari looked up at her. ‘A few minutes. It is essentially the same operation I have performed many times on you.’

‘But this time in reverse,’ said Chessene. ‘This time you are taking from an Androgum rather than augmenting one.’

‘The principle is no different,’ Dastari said. ‘What will you do when Stike discovers the plan has been changed?’

Chessene shrugged. ‘I have no further use for Stike. He and his underling must be destroyed.’

‘How?’ Dastari asked. ‘The probic vent is their only vulnerable point.’

‘I’ll tell you when we’ve finished here.’ Chessene gave an inscrutable smile. But it was a smile, Dastari thought, that boded ill for the Sontarans.

He went on working, monitoring the flow of genetic material, wondering just what Chessene had in mind.

The Sontarans were an awesome combination, unstoppable by any of the weaponry they had brought with them from the station. Shockeye, at his most savage, might deal with one of them but not both.

He switched off the power flow and checked the Doctor’s condition. There were no rejection symptoms.

‘I have given the Time Lord a fifty per cent Androgum inheritance,’ he said. ‘Within an hour that will become the dominant genetic factor and I can then stabilise his cell structure.’

‘Good.’ Chessene gave a nod of satisfaction. ‘Before then we must deal with the Sontarans.’

Dastari looked at her. ‘What have you in mind exactly?’

‘Coronic acid kills them,’ Chessene said. ‘The Rutans decimated them at Vollotha with coronic acid shells.’

‘But we haven’t –’

Chessene interrupted him. ‘I brought three canisters from the station.’ She smiled at the expression on his face.

‘So you planned for this?’ Dastari said.

‘Of course.’

Dastari gazed at her and, for the first time, a tiny qualm of doubt tinged his mind. He remembered the Doctor’s words of warning. Had he, indeed, created not a god-like creature but a scheming, blood-crazed monster? To have obtained coronic acid she must have entered into some secret deal with the Rutans. And to have planned it all for so long and so far ahead indicated a nefarious and Machiavellian cunning that he had not anticipated. It came from no genetic source that he had implanted and neither was it part of the Androgum nature; despite their excessive carnality, or perhaps because of it, they were a simple, uncomplicated species. Chessene’s deviousness, he thought, must have grown within her of its own accord, like a serpent from an egg.

So engrossed was he in his thoughts that it was not until she took him by the sleeve that he realised she was addressing him. ‘Come, Dastari,’ she said, leading him from the cellar. ‘You must go and find the Sontarans.

They’ll still be searching the grounds. I’ll tell you how we bait the trap...’

Her voice faded into the distance. Shockeye grunted like an awakening mammoth. He started to sit up and found himself caught up in the metallic coils.

Growling with anger, he ripped them from his body and, for good measure, took the genetic-tissue-transferer bodily in his arms and smashed it to pieces against the floor.

He had seen that equipment often enough in Dastari's operating theatre on Station J7 to know its purpose.

'Chessene,' he snarled, 'you have betrayed me! You have betrayed the blood o' the Quawncing Grig!'

He ripped back the green theatre sheet that covered the body on the operating table, intending to strangle at birth, as it were, the hybrid filth that was lying there. The Doctor stared up at him with dreamy eyes. His face had changed, the brow-ridge standing out more prominently above features that had coarsened and become brutalised.

'Capercaillies in brandy sauce,' he muttered.

'What?' said Shockeye.

'With a stuffing of black pudding made of fresh pig's blood with herbs and pepper,' said the Doctor. 'And the breast of the bird should be slit and studded with truffles.'

Shockeye stared down at him. He said, 'What are capercaillies, you Time Lord mongrel?'

The Doctor wiped his lips. 'The biggest, fattest, juiciest of birds that ever graced a roasting dish,' he said.

Shockeye's face showed a flicker of interest. 'You know the cuisine of this planet?' he asked.

'Of course I know it!' the Doctor said indignantly. He sat up and took Shockeye by the arm. 'I've eaten pressed duck at the Tour D'Argent that would make you weep with pleasure. The birds are all just nine weeks old and have been reared only on corn, fruit pulp and molasses. They are exquisite, Shockeye!' He rubbed his head. 'Why am I thinking of food like this?'

Shockeye chuckled and put an arm round the Doctor's shoulders. 'Because you are now my half-brother,' he said,

'an Androgum. But listen – could you lead me to one of these eating places to sample the local dishes?'

'Why not?' said the Doctor. He swung his legs down from the table. 'Shockeye, you and I will dine tonight like kings of ancient Araby!'

Still weak from the anaesthetic, he stumbled as he attempted to stand and Shockeye offered a supporting arm.

'Come, my dear friend!' he said. 'Let's waste no more time.'

Together, arm in arm, the Androgum and the half-Time Lord went from the cellar.

## 11

# Ice Passage Ambush

'You're sure you're feeling better?'

Better, Peri thought, was a relative term. Her ears were ringing like the cathedral bells that had brought them to Seville and her neck felt as though it had been dislocated.

So she decided not to nod. Instead she smiled and said ironically, 'I'm feeling just swell, Doctor.'

Jamie gave a warning hiss and jerked his head towards the hacienda. Two figures were approaching, skirting the shrubbery in which they crouched. It was Peri's first sight of the Sontarans and she was unable to suppress a little gasp of fear.

Shockeye, she thought, was bad enough but, in form at least, he had human similarities. The squat, heavily-armoured creatures stumping towards them were alien in every feature. And there was a cold, arrogant confidence about the way they carried themselves that she had never seen in any other species. They walked like masters of the universe.

The Sontarans were carrying massive, triple-barrelled weapons of some pale, shimmering metal. 'Mezon blasters,'

the Doctor muttered. 'They're expecting trouble.'

Dastari came down the steps of the hacienda and saw the Sontarans, now only a few feet from where the Doctor and his companions were concealed. Dastari raised a hand and beckoned. 'Stike! This way,' he called.

Varl started to raise his blaster but Stike stayed him with a casual wave. 'Not yet. Chessene first,' he said. 'She's the more dangerous.' He turned and called across the courtyard. 'What is it, Dastari?'

Dastari came towards them. 'The Time Lord has returned,' he said. 'We saw him from the house.'

'Where is he?' Stike said.

'He's entered the passage. Chessene is waiting in the cellars,' Dastari said, gesturing towards the derelict outbuilding. 'If you go in at this end we have him trapped.'

Stike glanced at Varl. 'Very well,' he said. 'Tell Chessene we'll wait two minutes and then enter.'

Dastari said, 'She wants him taken alive if possible.'

The Group Marshal nodded. 'Of course.' He stood watching Dastari as he hurried back to the house.

'Do we go in, sir?' Varl asked.

'Certainly,' Stike said. He watched the unpainted front door of the hacienda close behind Dastari. 'If the Time Lord has been foolhardy enough to return we can take him captive and use him to put the Rassilon Imprimature on many other machines. Think of it, major. A Sontaran time squadron could strike the Rutans without warning in any part of the universe!'

'That is a brilliant tactical concept, sir,' Varl said admiringly. 'The High Command must already be thinking of you as their future Commander-in-Chief.'

'Oh, I don't know, Varl.' Stike shook his head modestly.

'There are many officers senior to me in rank and experience, you know.'

‘Everyone in Nine Group believes you will be the next C-in-C, sir.’

‘Well, we’ll see,’ Stike said. ‘The capture of a working time machine certainly won’t harm my chances.’

He turned and led the way towards the outbuilding. The Doctor realised he had been unconsciously holding his breath while the Sontarans stood so near. He exhaled a long sigh of relief.

‘What’s happening?’ Peri whispered.

‘A double double-cross, I should think.’ The Doctor smiled. ‘The situation gets more interesting by the minute.’

Inside the old shed, Varl manoeuvred his bulk through the trapdoor and disappeared down the ladder. Stike handed him down the mezon-blasters and followed, moving as quietly as possible. He wanted to take the Time Lord by surprise.

But the surprise was coming up behind him. Chessene stepped out from the junk-filled corner where she had been hiding. She was carrying three red canisters. She unclipped the caps of the canisters, freeing the detonators, and then lobbed them through the trapdoor down into the narrow pasage. In the same instant she kicked the trapdoor shut.

The crash of the trapdoor brought Varl spinning round and he took the full force of the exploding acid. He fired one shot from his mezon-blaster, blowing out the trapdoor and a large area of the surrounding floor, before his tissues burst into a ghastly green flame. Varl staggered back and a long, ullulating scream of agony was torn from his throat.

Though Varl himself could not hear it.

Stike, protected by his comrade’s body from the main burst of acid, had fallen to his knees but he kept crawling, dragging himself down the passage away from the danger.

Behind him Varl’s death-cries died into choked sobs. Stike decided he would recommend the major for inclusion in the Golden Roll of Sontaran Heroes.

Outside, still hiding in the shrubbery around the hacienda, the Doctor and his companions had heard the boom of the mezon-blaster followed by Varl’s dying screams. Now they watched Chessene returning to the house. She was too far away for the Doctor to judge her expression but there was an unhurried complacency about her walk that spoke volumes.

‘It looks as though Chessene’s won,’ he said.

‘What d’you think she did?’ Jamie asked.

‘Coronic acid, at a guess,’ the Doctor said. ‘The Rutans developed it because it’s especially effective against cloned tissue. Up to now the Sontarans haven’t come up with an answer.’

‘Doctor, look!’ Peri pointed.

The Doctor had been watching Chessene as she entered the hacienda. Now he looked in the direction that Peri was pointing and saw Shockeye coming round the corner of the building arm-in-arm with the figure that was himself.

‘Well, well,’ he said thoughtfully. ‘Now where can we be going?’

‘They look quite friendly,’ Jamie said with surprise.

The Doctor nodded, narrowing his eyes as he watched the incongruous pair disappearing down the drive.

‘Dastari’s given him an Androgum injection,’ he said. ‘My features are totally changed.’

‘What are we going to do?’ Peri asked anxiously.

The Doctor moved further back into the bushes and got to his feet. ‘We’ll have to follow them and watch for a chance to separate them. Come on.’

Keeping in the cover of the bushes fringing the drive, they shadowed them down to the dusty track that led past the plantation. They seemed to be in the best of spirits as they set out in the direction of Seville, and although the Doctor could not hear what Shockeye and his other self were discussing with such animation he had little difficulty in guessing the nature of the subject.

‘Quail Pâté, I think, Shockeye,’ the Doctor was saying,

‘followed by a bisque de crevettes. Then a few juicy T-bone steaks washed down by an ample sufficiency of Monthelier.

After that we can get down to business.’

‘Can’t we walk a little quicker?’ Shockeye said hungrily.

‘Wait,’ said the Doctor. ‘Something’s coming.’

Behind them he had heard the spluttering chug of an internal combustion engine. An old, dusty farm truck was trundling down the track towards them. The Doctor stepped out into the middle of the road and held up an imperious hand. The truck, rusty brakes squealing, ground to a halt and its swarthy-skinned, straw-hatted driver leaned inquiringly from the cab.

‘ *Si, señor*?’

Shockeye reached up and took the old farmer by the throat, hauling him from his seat. With a casual twist, he broke the man’s neck and tossed the body into the roadside ditch. The Doctor watched with an indulgent smile.

‘Can you work this machine?’ Shockeye said.

‘Of course,’ said the Doctor. ‘Get in, my friend. We shall be in Seville in five minutes.’

They climbed into the seats of the battered truck and, with a grating of gears, lurched off down the pot-holed track. The other Doctor with Peri and Jamie came over the wall of the plantation and stood staring in dismay.

‘Now what do we do?’ Peri said.

‘Run!’ said the Doctor. ‘We can’t let them get too far ahead.’

They set off at a steady jog, following the truck which was already a distant dust-cloud. Jamie said, ‘I canna believe that was the Doctor – just standing there letting that wee man get killed!’

‘Right now, I’m afraid he’s eighty per cent Androgum,’

the Doctor said. ‘By the time the effect reaches me it’ll be close to a hundred per cent.’

‘Reaches *you*?’ Peri said.

The Doctor’s face was set. ‘It will – unless we can save him... I’m already feeling changes,’ he added mysteriously.

He lengthened his stride.

Peri and Jamie exchanged a worried glance. They adjusted their own pace to keep up with him. Too short of breath to ask any more questions, they ran on doggedly, each of them wondering just what the Doctor had meant.

A mile behind them, in the cellars of the hacienda, Chessene and Dastari stared at the wreckage of the operating theatre. Mangled metal was lying everywhere.

‘This is Shockeye’s doing!’ Chessene said.

Dastari looked at her. ‘Where can they have gone?’

‘That’s obvious. The Doctor has absorbed the Quawncing Grig genes and Shockeye is always ravenous.

They’re hunting food.’

Dastari said, ‘Chessene, if the Doctor isn’t stabilised within two hours at the most –’

‘He’ll reject the transfusion. Yes, I’m well aware of that.’

‘We must find them!’

He turned to leave but Chessene stopped him. ‘Wait...

In this place there is little hunting. But the Doña Arana remembers many restaurants in the city. That is where we shall find them.’

‘Restaurants?’ Dastari said blankly.

‘Places where food is served for a fee,’ she explained.

‘Come.’

She led the way out of the cellars, so intent on her own thoughts that for once she was unaware of the murderous vibrations directed at her from the darkness of the furthest cellar. Luckily for Chessene, the Group Marshal had dropped his mezon-blaster back in the passage.

‘Treacherous hag!’ Stike muttered venomously. ‘I shall return to destroy that Androgum filth...’

Staggering to his feet, he moved drunkenly and uncertainly into the main cellar. The Kartz-Reimer module still stood unharmed in the corner. Nothing had changed, he thought. Leading his Ninth Battle Group to victory in the Madillon Cluster remained the first priority.

That was his duty as a Sontaran. After that, he could think about the personal pleasure of exacting vengeance on Chessene.

Stike moved the switch that cut out the external control panel and went into the module. He settled himself at the drive centre and with shaking hands – he was still suffering from the gas given off by the coronic acid – he set up a de-mat pattern and pressed ignition.

Immediately his body was flung back by the shattering force of vapourisation. Raw power thundered and pulsed nakedly across the gap left by the missing briode-nebuliser.

He roared with pain as his molecular structure destabilised. He could feel himself falling apart.

Only the deep-seated Sontaran instinct for survival saved him. Although the pain in his body was all-pervasive, blotting out rational thought, he forced a hand down to the ignition cut-out. The power-flow faded away and the turmoil of sound died until it was only a hellish echo lingering in his head.

Stike took a shuddering breath. Something had gone wrong. The module was not only not functioning, it was a deathtrap. With a huge effort, he dragged himself to his feet and blundered out of the cabinet.

His body was not working well. He had sustained internal damage. His one chance now was to get back to his unit and to put himself in the care of the physical resuscitation team. Suddenly he recalled ordering Varl to set their craft for self-

destruction. The thought galvanised him into action and he staggered from the cellar as fast as his ailing legs would carry him.

The steps up from the cellar loomed like a mountain.

Stike clawed his way painfully to the top, his body racked by violent shaking spasms. How long was it since Varl had set the self-destruct mechanism? Stike had lost count of time. He reeled across the hall, fell down the steps of the portico, dragged himself up, and stumbled on with nothing in his mind but the necessity of shutting down his ship's power reactors.

He could hear them as he got nearer, whining up towards maximum, and past maximum into overload, screaming into the red zone and then white-out. In his mind's eye he saw the needle quivering against the stop at the end of the power-gauge. He had a hand on the crew door and the fumes of hot metal were rank in his nostrils.

And then Stike terminated.

The explosion was an eruption of flame and white-hot, incandescent metal, showering high into the sky like a giant Roman candle. Trees were set alight in the first violent blast of heat and the undergrowth for fifty yards around smouldered and smoked where fiery debris from the ship had landed.

Stike's right leg was blown over the roof of the hacienda to land in the courtyard. It was the only recognisable part of him to survive. The rest, blasted into instant foliar feed, rained down in a fine paste over a wide area of the old plantation.

Oddly, despite the force of the explosion, there was little sound. Chessene and Dastari, hurrying down the road to Seville, heard nothing.

A mile in front of them, the Doctor, Jamie and Peri slowed to a walk as they entered the narrow, cobbled streets of the old Arab Quarter. Jamie looked around hopelessly. There were wee, crooked gunnies criss-crossing in every direction.

He said, 'We'll never find him here, Doctor.'

'It's like a maze,' Peri said.

Then they turned a corner and saw the abandoned truck, doors hanging open, right in front of them. The Doctor went up to it and felt the radiator.

'They can't be more than two minutes ahead of us,' he said. For a moment, he stood with his head cocked to one side, concentrating intently. Then he pointed down one of the narrow streets.

'This way, I think.'

'How do you know?' Peri asked, skipping to keep up with the Doctor's long legs.

'My dear girl,' he said loftily, 'it is *me* we're following.'

That didn't make too much sense to Peri but she let it slide. The Doctor suddenly veered off the street and hurried up a flight of stone steps. They led out on to an old walled roof from which vantage point there was a view down into several of the winding alleyways.

'There they go!' shouted Jamie, pointing in sudden excitement.

Shockeye and the other Doctor were walking in a purposeful way along one of the alleys. The Doctor took careful note of the direction in which Shockeye and his alter ego were heading.

'Right, quick!' he said. 'We can cut them off.'

He ran back down the steps and plunged again into the maze of little streets. After a few turns, Jamie and Peri had completely lost their bearings but the Doctor forged on at full speed, apparently completely confident of the route.

Jamie calculated they covered a full half mile before they came past the steps again.

‘We’ve been here before,’ he said, pointing to the flight of steps.

‘Nonsense!’ the Doctor said. ‘Different steps.’

‘They dinna look nae different.’

‘Double negative,’ said the Doctor chidingly. He rubbed a finger across his nose. ‘I think we’ve lost them, you know.’

# 12

**Alas, Poor Oscar**

La Piranella had class. It looked and indeed was expensive.

In the long dining-room the light from a dozen chandeliers, suspended from gilded cherubs in the ceiling, glinted back from satinwood panelling and starched napery, silver cutlery and fine crystal. Waiters in dinner-jackets moved quietly among tables that were set a discreet distance apart. They would, in fact, have found it difficult to move noisily: the richly-patterned carpet was of such opulence that it hid their shoe-tops.

Less than half the tables were occupied. Oscar Botcherby, patting his mouth to conceal a yawn, decided they were going to have a quiet night. He strolled towards the restaurant's double swing-doors and stared through the glass into the street. Hardly anyone about. He noticed that the brass door furniture was becoming tarnished. He would have to point that out to the cleaner in the morning.

Then he saw two rather rum-looking coves coming purposefully towards the restaurant. They were arm-in-arm and deep in animated conversion. But it was their dress that took Oscar's attention. The bigger cove sported an old frockcoat, a high hat and a cravat; his companion wore an equally ancient tailcoat and a narrow string-tie under a butterfly collar. They looked like a pair of old-fashioned, raffish *boulevardiers* out on a spree.

Oscar took up a position to the side of the doors and adjusted his welcoming smile. They had stopped, momentarily, on the steps outside and he heard the larger of the two sports saying, 'Personally I have never seen the necessity for starting a meal with – what was your word?'

'Hors d'oeuvres.'

'Quite unnecessary, in my opinion. A concession to gluttony. Eight or nine main dishes should be enough for anyone.'

'Well, here it is the custom,' said the tailcoat. 'All the greatest chefs – Careme, Brillat Savarin, the noble Escoffier

– agree one should begin with a light dish. Something to bring relish to the appetite. Pâté de fois gras de Strasbourg en croute, for instance, or a couple of dozen Belon oysters.

Even a simple salad with artichoke hearts and fresh baked country ham will suffice to get the digestive juices flowing.'

'All these delights that you speak of!' the big man shook his head impatiently. 'I cannot wait another moment.'

He charged up the steps and into the restaurant. Oscar swooped. 'Welcome to La Piranella, señors.... How delightful to see – uh – gentlemen of the old school. May I enquire if you have a booking?'

Oscar knew the answer to that but it never did any harm to let people know they were in the kind of establishment where hoi-polloi might not get served. There were no candles stuck in chianti flagons in his restaurant.

The big fellow gave him a puzzled look. 'Booking?' he snapped. 'I want food!'

'No reservation?' Oscar gave a slight, regretful shake of his head. He was good at this kind of thing. He glanced thoughtfully round the restaurant as though it was

packed with wall-to-wall diners. Then he brightened. ‘Come this way, sir. Fortunately, I have an excellent table for you.’

He led the odd pair to a table half-way down the dining room and summoned the attention of a waiter with one raised eyebrow. ‘Juan, attend to these gentlemen.’

The waiter produced menu cards the size of newspapers and retired to hover discreetly just out of earshot. The man in the frockcoat took off his hat – he had a bad case of alopecia, Oscar noticed – and glanced down the menu.

‘Do you serve humans here?’ he asked.

‘Most of the time, sir,’ Oscar said wittily. ‘Oh, yes, I would venture to say that most of our customers are certainly human.’

The big joker glared. ‘I mean human meat, you fawning imbecile!’

Oscar kept his smile intact. In his time he had been insulted by experts. Theatre critics, for instance. He said,

‘No, sir. The nouvelle cuisine has not yet penetrated this establishment.’

With this quip he bowed politely and retreated. A pair to keep an eye on, he thought. He wondered if they were sozzled. While he fully approved of eccentricity there were limits to what was permissible. Poor Juan was going to have a trying evening.

Not far away, the other Doctor and his companions were still traipsing hopefully but aimlessly through the streets of the old city. Then suddenly the Doctor bundled them into a doorway, flattening himself in beside them.

‘What’s wrong?’ Peri said.

‘Chessene and Dastari!’ said the Doctor. He risked a cautious peep out of the doorway. ‘I suppose they’re desperate to get their hands on me before the effect of the operation begins to wear off.’

‘What are they doing?’ Jamie asked.

‘Checking the restaurants!’ The Doctor struck the fist of one hand into the palm of the other. ‘I should have thought of that!’

‘Well, let’s try another street,’ Peri suggested. ‘They can’t have had time to visit them all.’

Or even a half of them, Jamie thought. From what he’d seen there were more inns and chop-houses in this town than there were fleas on a dog.

The Doctor waited until Chessene and the professor had disappeared from view and then hurried his companions across into another street that seemed rather wider and more ambitious than its neighbours. Every third building seemed to support some kind of eating house and they sped along, peering in through windows and doors, with the growing feeling that they were searching for two needles in a very large haystack.

Peri came down the shabby steps of one seedy establishment and shook her head. ‘Full of German tourists eating couscous,’ she reported.

‘It didn’t look the right kind of place,’ said the Doctor.

‘They’ll have gone for somewhere more elaborate.’ He stared across the road and there was suddenly a sharpened intensity in his eyes that made Peri turn to see what he was looking at. She could see nothing. There was only a mangy alley-cat scratching its back against the corner of a building.

‘What’s the matter?’ she asked.

‘Look, there’s a cat,’ he said. He licked his lips in a curiously hungry manner.

‘What about it?’ Jamie asked.

‘They say there’s more than one way to skin a cat,’ the Doctor said, ‘but the best way is to chop its head, legs and tail off. Then you simply strip its pelt back from the neck.’

Jamie and Peri looked at each other. The Doctor set off across the street, stooping, his hand held out. ‘Here, pussy,’

he called. ‘Nice puss. Come here, puss...’

Peri caught up with him and took his arm. ‘Doctor, what are you doing?’

He looked at her foggily. ‘Cats make quite good eating, you know,’ he said. ‘The best way of cooking small mammals is to bake them.’

‘Doctor, I don’t understand!’ Peri said, staring at him in concern.

He swayed and clutched for support at a wall. He shook his head bewilderedly. ‘I thought it would happen. We’re turning into an Androgum...’

‘You can’t!’ Peri said angrily.

Jamie took the Doctor’s arm and shook him. ‘You’re nae an Androgum, you’re a Time Lord! Get a hold of yourself!’

The Doctor straightened and stared at them. He rubbed his face. ‘Of course, you’re right. I’m a Time Lord.’

Jamie nodded. ‘Aye, well, that’s better. Are you all right now?’

‘For the moment.’ The Doctor set off along the street.

He looked to be himself again. ‘Come on, we must hurry.’

Ahead of them was a more imposing-looking restaurant, its marble steps flanked by bay trees in tubs. Peri looked at the name on the canvas awning over the doors.

‘La Piranella,’ she said. ‘That’s where Oscar works.’

They headed across the street towards the restaurant.

‘Mind not to start talking to him,’ Jamie said, ‘or we’ll be here the night.’

In the restaurant Shockeye and the Doctor were finally slowing down. They were sprawled at their table, still gluttonously stuffing food from the array of dishes spread between them. Juan, their waiter, had not had time to clear anything from the table; he seemed to have been kept continuously on the run fetching further orders from the kitchen. And each time, as he left the kitchen, he handed Anita, sitting in the cashier’s kiosk, an order slip which she filed under the table number before neatly itemising all the orders and totalling them up for the final bill.

She had now completed her totting-up for the gentlemen at table ten and, somewhat anxiously, was showing the result to Oscar.

‘Nobody can run up a bill for four thousand pesetas!’ he exclaimed. ‘What on earth have they had?’

‘They’ve had quenelles, ortolons and crevettes,’ Anita told him. ‘They had the truffled goose with almonds, the wild boar with Grand Veneur sauce, saddle of venison with chocolate, eight T-bones and an entire fieldfare pie.’

‘A whole fieldfare pie?’ Oscar shook his head in astonishment. ‘That’s twelve servings!’

‘The big gentleman was particularly insistent,’ Anita said. ‘They’ve also just ordered a dozen breasts of pigeon –

probably to help down the last of their dozen bottles of wine.’

‘What a Gargantuan repast!’ Oscar said, glancing admiringly across at table ten. ‘It’s incredible – and they’re still eating!’

Anita said, ‘I think they should start paying, Oscar.’

He nodded and took the bill from her. ‘Yes, well, leave it to me.’ He went over to the table where the two gourmands were still lethargically transferring food from plate to mouth. ‘I trust everything was to your satisfaction, gentlemen?’ he said with an ingratiating smile.

‘Tolerable,’ said Shockeye.

‘Well, may I say, sir, what a pleasure it has been to see such dedicated trenchermen enjoying their food.’ He placed the bill down on the table. ‘Unfortunately, the reckoning is rather high.’

Shockeye stared at the bill suspiciously. ‘What is this?’

Oscar said, ‘It is the amount you owe, sir.’

Shockeye turned to the Doctor who was leaning back with a glassy expression on his face. ‘Do you understand this?’ he said.

The Doctor nodded and belched. ‘He’s asking for money.’

‘Money?’ Shockeye said.

‘Tokens of exchange,’ said the Doctor, belching again.

Enlightenment dawned. ‘Oh! This is our tally?’

Shockeye said, looking at Oscar.

‘Yes, sir.’

Shockeye fumbled through his pockets, finally producing a crumpled note which he threw on the table.

‘Here.’

‘Keep the change,’ said the Doctor sleepily.

Oscar looked at the curious offering, which was black and red and seemed to be made of perforated cardboard.

He wondered if he was going to have trouble with these two. ‘I’m sorry, sir,’ he said, shaking his head. ‘I can see you are a wit as well as a bon vivant. But this, whatever it is, is not acceptable.’

‘That is a twenty narg note!’ Shockeye said. He knew it could be changed anywhere on the nine planets.

‘I’m afraid it’s not acceptable here, sir.’

Shockeye struggled to contain his temper with this dolt of a human. He nudged the Doctor. ‘Do you have money?’

The Doctor opened his eyes. ‘What? Oh – money! Yes, let me see... I keep the stuff in one of these pockets.’

After a search he threw a wad of assorted paper shapes on to the table. Oscar picked through them with growing unease. He was definitely going to have trouble with these two. He wondered whether to signal Juan to call the police now. But that sort of thing was bad for the restaurant’s reputation. He decided to make one more attempt to settle matters without unpleasantness.

He pushed the pile of paper back towards the Doctor. ‘I don’t know where you got all this,’ he said. ‘The only one I recognise is five dollars in Confederate currency and that hasn’t been legal for over a century!’

‘Send this whimpering ninny away,’ Shockeye grumbled.

Oscar bent over the table. ‘Sir, if this is a joke it has gone on long enough. If you don’t wish to pay cash we can accept any recognised credit card.’

A huge hand closed on his shirt front and he suddenly saw that the big man was very angry indeed. ‘Your whining importunacy has acidised my stomach juices!’ he snarled.

Oscar felt himself being lifted off his feet and over the table and then something cold and hard penetrated his own stomach and ripped up to his breastbone, leaving a terrible aching pain in its wake. Then he was flung through the air to crash down on table seven.

Shockeye stood, glaring round, the bloody knife gleaming in his hand. Waiters and diners alike ran for the exit. Shockeye returned the knife to his belt and picked up his hat. The Doctor was snoring. Shockeye contemplated waking him and then decided to leave him. He went through to the back of the restaurant and out through the fire door.

The Doctor and his companions, entering the restaurant, had to push through the flood of people fighting to get out.

They saw Oscar’s limp body, his lifeblood staining the table linen red, and ran over to him. He was still alive, holding his stomach and groaning slightly.

‘Oscar, what happened?’ the Doctor said.

Oscar opened his eyes. ‘Ah, officer,’ he said. ‘Promptly on the scene as always.’

‘Let me see that,’ said the Doctor, opening Oscar’s shirt.

Once glance was enough to tell him there was no chance.

The savagery of Shockeye’s thrust had left Oscar practically disembowelled.

Oscar coughed and a blood-stained froth dribbled from his lips. ‘A ridiculous thing to happen,’ he said painfully.

‘Dissatisfied customers usually just fail to leave a tip.’

Anita came up and bent over him, averting her eyes from his grotesque injury. ‘You’re going to be all right, Oscar. I’ve called for an ambulance and the *Guardia Civil*.’

Oscar shook his head feebly. ‘No, I fear this is Botcherby’s last curtain call, my dear. The world will never see my... my definitive Hamlet now.’

‘We will, Oscar,’ Peri said. ‘We’ll all be there on the first night.’

Sweet child, he thought. Trying to comfort him. Most of the pain had faded now. In its place an icy coldness was spreading through his body. And the world was turning grey, all its colours fading and blurring together like they had in his favourite shirt when his mother washed it such a long time ago in Shepton Mallet and now he could see nothing at all and it was just like going to sleep. Death, in the dying, was not as bad as he had always feared.

‘ “To die, to sleep; To sleep, perchance to dream,” ’ he whispered. The Bard. Always an apt quote. ‘Where are you, Anita?’ he said.

‘I’m here,’ Anita said, the tears streaming down her face.

Oscar gazed up with sightless eyes. ‘Please take care of my beautiful moths,’ he said. ‘And darling old Teddy.’

He coughed and then the last breath sighed softly from his body. His eyes closed. Anita embraced him, her head on his chest and her grief soaked into his stiff shirtfront.

The Doctor and his companions turned tactfully away.

Jamie said suddenly, ‘Doctor, something’s happening to the Doctor! Look at his face!’

It was true. Jamie's Doctor was slumped back in his chair, apparently enjoying a peaceful snooze, and the brutalised features were slowly fading away as his face returned to normal.

'He's rejecting the Androgum implantation,' the Doctor said. He reached over the table and shook his other self awake. 'Can you walk?' he asked.

'You always seem concerned about whether I can walk or not!' he snapped testily. 'Of course I can walk.'

'Then it's time we left,' the Doctor said. He could hear the wail of approaching sirens. He led them out through the fire door Shockeye had used. They emerged into a narrow alley that opened out, after a few yards, into a small square.

'This way,' said one Doctor.

'Follow me,' said the other.

They set off in separate directions, then turned and glared at each other in mutual dislike.

'Now look!' said the one Peri thought of as her Doctor.

'You got me into this mess.'

'We've no time to argue,' Jamie's Doctor said. He eyed Jamie. 'How did you get here anyway?'

'I saved him after you abandoned him,' Peri's Doctor said.

The other glared. 'I did not abandon him, as you put it.

I –'

'We've no time to argue.'

'I've already said that.'

'I know I have.'

Peri decided to break up this childish quarrel. 'Will you two please stop squabbling?' she said. 'Let's go that way.'

She pointed across the square. And then a figure stepped from the shadows behind them. A figure in a long, dark gown.

'No, you'll come this way,' Chessene said, and the gun in her hand meant business. 'We've not finished with you yet.'

Shockeye was the first to return to the hacienda. He picked up Stike's leg in the courtyard and the sight of it seemed to amuse him. The inside of the hacienda was a mess. It looked as though it had been hit by a bomb, which, in a way, it had. Most of the windows had been blown in and shards of glass lay everywhere among the dust and fallen plaster. Shockeye laid Stike's leg on the chest in the hall and went through to the back of the house. He had a fair idea of what had happened.

Outside, amid a circle of blackened trees, he found a charred, saucer-like depression about thirty metres in diameter. He thought that was even funnier than his discovery of Stike's leg. He rolled about for a time, chortling with innocent mirth, and then returned to the house and began composing a song about the demise of the Sontarans. He was on the third verse when he heard voices outside and saw Chessene and Dastari herding their prisoners across the courtyard.

His eyes widened at the sight of the little fill who had escaped him walking beside the young jack animal he had so coveted on Station J7. He licked his lips and opened the door in welcome. Shockeye was feeling hungry again.

The little group came into the hall and the Doctor that Shockeye had dined with looked around. He gave a disparaging sniff. 'If she was my chatelaine, I'd sack her, Dastari,' he said.

‘Disgusting, isn’t it?’ said the other Doctor amiably.

‘What’s happened here?’ Chessene demanded.

Shockeye smiled. ‘It would seem that Group Marshal Stike vapourised his spacecraft, madam – and himself. I found this.’ He showed her the ragged remains of Stike’s leg.

‘So he survived the coronic acid,’ Dastari murmured.

‘Obviously.’ Chessene looked at the prisoners and motioned with her gun. ‘Down to the cellars. You know the way, I think.’

The two Doctors exchanged a glance and shrugged.

They led the way down the steps. ‘Home, sweet home,’ said the smaller of the two. ‘I’m getting quite attached to this place.’

He led the way through into the main cellar. Chessene stared at the Kartz-Reimer module, its door still hanging open. ‘The control panel has been detached,’ she said. ‘If Stike had the stupidity to interfere –’

‘You’ll kill him?’ said the smaller Doctor, smiling.

Chessene ignored him. ‘Is it damaged?’ she asked Dastari who was anxiously examining the cabinet.

He shook his head. ‘I can’t see any structural damage.

But the briode-nebuliser is missing.’

‘Do you mean this?’ said the fair-haired Doctor casually.

He produced the briode-nebuliser from his pocket.

Chessene snatched it from him. ‘Why did you remove it?’

‘Because it contains my symbiotic print,’ the Doctor said, reasonably.

‘How did your imprint get into this?’ Dastari asked.

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Stike learned how to initiate symbiosis. He forced me to use the machine.’

Chessene was staring at him with deep suspicion. ‘As I read your mind, you tell the truth,’ she said. ‘But there is a simple way of testing whether you are still trying to deceive us.’

She caught Peri by the arm and dragged her over to the cabinet. Dastari had plugged the briode-nebuliser back into its socket and was restoring the external control panel’s electro-magnetic connections.

‘In, girl!’ Chessene said, pushing Peri into the module.

She slammed the door. Peri stared out in fear and was only partially comforted by the wink of encouragement she received from her Doctor.

And then she was gone. They stood for several tense seconds staring at the spot where the time module had stood. Dastari, at the control panel, exchanged a worried glance with Chessene.

Suddenly the sound of the module’s return filled the cellar and it shimmered into view again. Peri was still sitting rigidly inside. Chessene opened the door and pulled her out.

‘Satisfied?’ asked the Doctor.

‘Chain these creatures up,’ Chessene told Dastari.

‘Chain us up?’ The Doctor looked outraged. ‘I’ve just handed you the power of time travel on a plate. Show a little gratitude!’

Chessene ignored him. She watched, gun in hand, as Dastari locked rusting ankle-fetters to the legs of their captives. Shockeye nudged her pleadingly.

‘Before we leave, madam, let me cook one of the humans.’

‘Didn’t you sate your appetite sufficiently in the city?’

Chessene said with an indulgent smile.

‘A mere snack.’ Shockeye spread his hands. ‘You promised we could have a human before leaving Earth.’

Chessene shrugged. ‘Well, if it would please you...

Which do you want?’

‘I’ll take the jack!’ Shockeye said eagerly. He seized Jamie by the neck. ‘Come on, my beauty.’

‘Get your hands off!’ Jamie cried, struggling helplessly.

Shockeye, beaming, picked him up and carried him, like a farmer with a flapping chicken, from the cellar.

Dastari finished adjusting the ankle-fetters on Peri and the two Doctors and followed Chessene out. Peri looked from her Doctor to the other. Both seemed lost in thought.

After a time the smaller Doctor said grudgingly, ‘You’re almost as clever as I am. I presume you’ve sabotaged the briode-nebuliser?’

The taller one nodded absently. ‘Pared the interface.’

‘Precisely what I’d have done.’

Peri looked from one to the other. ‘But it – it worked, didn’t it?’

‘I left a thin membrane so that it would work once,’ her Doctor said. ‘I knew she’d want to test it.’

‘Well, don’t sound so smug,’ the other snapped. ‘We still have to get Jamie out of that butcher’s hands!’

Peri’s Doctor rubbed his nose. ‘Can you reach that wheelchair, Peri?’

‘I’m not elastic!’ Peri protested.

‘You should be able to reach the wheel-spokes,’ the other Doctor said.

Peri stretched forward, her left ankle clamped in the fetter. At the very limit of her reach her fingers just touched the rim of one wheel.

‘Good girl,’ her Doctor said encouragingly.

‘What’s the idea, anyway?’ Peri asked, still straining out to reach the chair.

‘Roll it back towards him,’ said the other Doctor.

‘Why?’ Peri grunted. ‘He’s not going anywhere in it.’

Nevertheless, using only the tips of her fingers, she managed to roll the wheelchair back until it was within her Doctor’s reach. He grabbed it. ‘What d’you think?’ he said.

‘Might work,’ said the other. ‘Worth trying.’

‘Right!’ said her Doctor. He slammed the chair forward violently and its padded seat wedged itself firmly underneath the operating table. At the full extent of one fetter, the Doctor stretched out with his free leg and got his foot hooked beneath the chair’s rear axle.

Gritting his teeth, he attempted to tilt the chair backwards. It moved an inch or two and the operating table canted fractionally.

‘Come on!’ said the other Doctor. ‘Use some strength.’

Peri’s Doctor glanced round sourly but said nothing. He re-adjusted his position and, at last, Peri realised what he was trying to do. Dastari had left the key to their fetters lying on the table and the Doctor was trying to shake it off into the chair.

She watched, biting her lip, as the Doctor tried again.

His body shook with the strain as, using his foot for a lever, he raised the chair inch by inch, tilting the operating table towards him. Quite suddenly the heavy key slid off the table and dropped into the chair.

'Splendid!' said the other Doctor. 'I couldn't have done better myself.'

This time her Doctor didn't even spare a sour look. He hooked the chair back towards him and after that it was only a moment before he had unsnapped his ankle fetter.

He went to free Peri and then, distantly but fearfully, a dreadful cry of pain floated down into the cellars.

'Never mind us!' the other Doctor said urgently. 'That's Jamie! Help him!'

The Doctor nodded and, pressing the key into Peri's hand, ran towards the cellar steps. Another awful scream rang through the house as he bounded up them.

Dastari, disturbed by the noise Jamie was making, looked into the kitchen. Shockeye had the human trussed like a turkey and was carefully working over his body with a pair of arcing electrodes.

'What are you doing?' Dastari said in astonishment.

'Tenderising the meat,' Shockeye said. He pointed to Jamie's thigh. 'See how the flesh is marbling? That's the fatty tissue breaking up.'

'You should kill him first, surely?'

'It works better on a live animal,' Shockeye said. He stabbed the electrodes into Jamie again, galvanising another shudder in the pain-racked body and another hideous cry of agony – not so loud as the previous cries, however, because Jamie was slowly slipping into blessed unconsciousness.

'It looks very painful,' Dastari said.

Shockeye smiled at him across the body. He was aware how sentimental some people were about animals. He said,

'Simply a nervous reflex, professor. I've been butchering all my life. Primitive creatures don't feel pain in the way that we would.'

He took Jamie's leg between a massive finger and thumb and pinched it in professional appraisal.

'There,' he said, setting the electrodes aside. 'I think it's about ready. I'll just put a tray under it to collect the blood.

Waste not, want not.'

That, he remembered, had been one of his dear old mother's favourite sayings. He picked up a knife and gave its edge a final burnish against a steel. 'This is the part where you can tell a butcher from a botcher,' he said. 'All the joints should have a clean line.'

As he turned towards Jamie the door banged open and Chessene came in. She looked livid with anger. 'Dastari, you bungling oaf!' she stormed. 'One of the Time Lords has escaped!'

Dastari's jaw dropped. 'That's impossible.'

'You couldn't have fastened the manacles properly.'

'But I know I did,' he protested.

'Don't argue! It's vital that he be caught and killed.

Find him, both of you.'

Shockeye looked pained. 'Madam, this will only take a few minutes,' he said. 'I thought we would have the saddle and the haunches for supper and –'

Chessene whirled on him. 'Never mind that now! I want that Time Lord found.'

‘Very good, madam.’ Shockeye put his knife down regretfully.

‘I’d have killed them both earlier but I felt there was still some further secret – something they were trying to conceal from me,’ Chessene said, leading the way out of the kitchen.

Even as the door swung shut behind them, an arm came through the open window. The Doctor unhooked the catch and climbed in over the sill. Jamie was moaning faintly, his eyes closed. The Doctor picked up a knife and slashed through Jamie’s bonds.

‘Jamie,’ he said anxiously. ‘Can you hear me, Jamie?’

A soft noise behind him made him turn. Shockeye was standing in the doorway, a gloating expression on his face.

‘I thought you might return to help the primitive,’ he said.

He took the knife from his belt and came menacingly across the room. The Doctor dodged round the chopping bench on which Jamie was lying but Shockeye, coming straight on, simply lifted it out of his way with one hand.

The knife came in a scything sweep towards the Doctor.

He made a despairing leap to one side and felt the blade slash into his leg.

Then he was running for the door, aware that the Androgum had turned and was racing after him. He outdistanced Shockeye across the hall, cleared the steps in one bound, and ran for his life towards the shelter of the trees.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Chessene hurrying from an outbuilding. She raised her gun and a shot whistled past his head as he dived into the cover of the undergrowth.

Chessene fired twice more, blindly, and then ran to the house. Shockeye was just emerging. ‘Shockeye, the Time Lord –’

Shockeye nodded calmly. ‘I know, madam. I wounded him, look.’ He pointed to a patch of blood on the step.

‘Then follow his blood trail,’ Chessene said. ‘Kill him, Shockeye.’

‘Certainly, madam.’ Shockeye set off across the courtyard to do her bidding. Chessene watched him. He wasn’t hurrying but then he had no need to hurry.

Androgums never lost a blood trail.

She looked down at the little puddle where the Doctor’s blood had sprayed on to the step. It was dark and red and glistening. Suddenly she was down on all fours, hungrily sniffing and licking the life-liquid...

Dastari, within the house, stared at her with horror and sudden revulsion. His creation, his wonderful demi-goddess, was still in the power of the basest animal instincts. Sick to his heart, the old professor turned his back on the sight of Chessene washing the doorstep with her tongue.

He went into the cellar passage and down the worn stone stairway. Jamie’s Doctor and Peri, free of their fetters, heard him approaching and quickly slipped their ankles back into the unlocked manacles.

‘Element of surprise,’ the Doctor whispered.

Dastari came into the cellar. He took out a gun, staring at them thoughtfully, and placed it on the operating table.

‘Chessene has told me to kill you,’ he said evenly.

‘Why can’t she do her own dirty work?’ said the Doctor.

He wondered if he could make the leap to the operating table and snatch the gun before Dastari had time to react.

He thought he probably wouldn't make it.

Up in the kitchen, Jamie got stiffly off the cutting bench.

And the blood of the McCrimmons, hereditary pipers to the Macleod of Dunvegan, was boiling.

'I'll have that Shockeye, so I will!' Jamie muttered, looking round the kitchen for a suitable weapon. There was, unfortunately, nothing like a claidheamhmor, the great two-handed claymore that Jamie and his highland clansmen could wield to such devastating effect.

But he found a sharp, bone-handled knife, with a six-inch blade. It had a good balance and came sweetly to his hand, reminding him of his beloved skein dhu. It was to prove a providential choice.

He began to think of the revenge he would take on Shockeye. This time he would face him on open ground.

There was a trick he had once practised for days, under the stern tutelage of wee Fulton McKay, the greatest knife-fighter in the whole of Scotland. As Shockeye came in, he would feint and then dive to the side, slashing backwards and downwards at the Androgum's hamstrings. Then it was into a forward roll and over to his feet and back again for another dancing attack on his crippled opponent. Jamie thought he would cut Shockeye to pieces before the final thrust to his heart. Already, he could almost feel Shockeye's blood gouting warmly over his hand and arm.

He went out into the hall, wondering where he would find the big Androgum. He heard voices coming from the cellars and went quietly down the steps.

The voices Jamie had heard were those of Chessene and Dastari, facing each other across the cellar. 'I ordered you to kill these two,' she said angrily. 'Why are they still alive?'

Dastari glanced at Peri and the Doctor. 'Because there has been enough killing, Chessene. And it is my fault. I took an Androgum – a lowly, unthinking creature of instinct – and tried to put you among the gods. That was my mistake.'

'I put *myself* among the gods!' Chessene retorted arrogantly, her eyes flashing fire. 'And now I shall liberate my people. With me as their leader we shall reign over all other beings.'

'Not for long,' the Doctor murmured. 'You'll eat most of them in a couple of years.'

Dastari said bitterly, 'The Doctor is right. I raised your abilities but your nature is unchanged. You are the same brutish primitive you always were.'

'Then die, Dastari!' Chessene said, raising her gun. 'I have no further use for you.'

Dastari made no attempt to reach for his own weapon.

Perhaps he wanted to die, the Doctor thought. Or perhaps he still could not bring himself to harm his creation.

Chessene squeezed the trigger and Dastari was flung back against the operating table. His knees buckled and he slumped to the floor. Chessene, smiling her coldly dreadful smile, turned the gun towards the Doctor and Peri.

Behind her Jamie flung the handy little knife he had found. It skimmed like an arrow across the cellar and buried deep into Chessene's gun-arm. She gave a gasp of pain and the gun dropped from her paralysed hand. She saw, without really

understanding how they had done it, that the Doctor and Peri had stepped out of their fetters and were coming towards her. But she had the time module. She could still escape.

Chessene dived into the cabinet, her good hand clawing for the de-mat. Looking back, she gave a mocking, triumphant laugh. Then the shockwave hit her. She gave a single ear-piercing scream and crumpled to the floor of the time module. The cabinet began to vibrate in a rough, erratic way, smoke pouring from its rear panel, and then, in a final explosion, it simply fell apart.

Peri stared at the shattered body. 'Is she dead?' she said unnecessarily.

'Very,' said the Doctor. 'Molecular disintegration.

Painful, I imagine, while it lasts.'

'That's it then,' Peri said.

'Except for Shockeye,' Jamie said grimly.

Shockeye, at that moment, was in tenacious pursuit of Peri's Doctor, pushing through the olive trees, only occasionally pausing to sniff the blood scent. He was gaining ground rapidly and enjoying himself. This was the sort of fun he liked.

'Your run is nearly ended, Time Lord,' he called.

The Doctor heard him and wished it was a run. But his leg was hurting too much. The best he could manage was a fast limp. He glanced back and thought he caught a glimpse of the Androgum through the trees.

He forced himself forward with extra effort. 'Give up, Time Lord!' Shockeye called again. He sounded very near.

'You cannot escape Shockeye o' the Quawncing Grig!'

A patch of bright colour on the ground ahead caught the Doctor's eye. He saw that it was the scattered posy of flowers Anita had picked a few short hours earlier. Lying on the ground a yard or two beyond them he saw Oscar's moth-killing box.

The sight put a wild idea into his mind. From his talk with Oscar on the way to the plantation he knew that the box contained cyanide. But how much?

The Doctor opened the box and took out the zinc grille at the bottom. There was a good handful of white cyanide crystals in the bottom. With a feverish urgency, he ripped out part of the lining of his coat and tipped the crystals into the cloth. He dipped the cyanide pad into a puddle and stepped back into the shelter of a thicket. White smoke began to wreath from the fuming cyanide.

Shockeye came pushing through the trees. He stooped and sniffed the ground where the Doctor had stood barely three seconds earlier.

'The blood is warm and salt, Time Lord,' he called. 'I know how near you are.'

The last remark was not entirely correct. The Doctor was much nearer than Shockeye thought. He sprang from the thicket on to the Androgum's broad back and clamped the cyanide pad over Shockeye's face.

Shockeye let out a muffled roar and his huge body heaved and bucked. It was like trying to hold on to an angry elephant. The Doctor clung on like a limpet but felt that at any moment the giant's enormous strength was going to dislodge him. Then he felt the big body sag and the violent struggles turn into shuddering convulsions.

Shockeye's legs gave way and he pitched forward on to his face with the Doctor still clinging determinedly to his back.

After a time the Doctor could feel no more movement beneath him. He got tiredly to his feet. Shockeye lay motionless, his head still wreathed in white cyanide vapour.

That, the Doctor thought, looking down at him, was one back for Oscar. He turned and limped back towards the hacienda.

When he entered the cellar he found Peri with Jamie and the other fellow. They were looking at the ruins of the Kartz-Reimer module.

'That's it then,' said Peri.

'Except for Shockeye,' Jamie said grimly.

'You don't have to worry about him,' the Doctor told them. 'He's been – uh – moth-balled.' He stared at the remains of the module. 'My word, that's a mess. It'll take you quite a while to repair that.'

'It won't be necessary,' said the other Doctor smugly.

He took a small black stickpin from the lapel of his tailcoat.

'A Stattenheim remote control!' The Doctor looked envious. 'Where did you get that? I've always wanted one of those.'

The Doctor twisted the button and gave a superior smile. 'Some of us have earned these little privileges, you know.'

The TARDIS appeared in the cellar and he opened its door. 'After you, Jamie.'

Jamie said, 'Goodbye, Peri... Doctor.'

He disappeared into the TARDIS. The Doctor turned in the doorway. He said, 'Oh, and do try to keep out of my way in the time continuum, there's a good fellow. It should be big enough for the two of us,'

Peri's Doctor opened his mouth indignantly but the door closed before he could speak. He watched the TARDIS dematerialise. 'Of all the conceited ingrates!' he said. 'I swear he almost succeeds in concealing my natural charm.'

Peri shook her head, puzzled. 'I don't understand how the TARDIS can be in two places at the same time.'

The Doctor looked at her in surprise. 'But that's the whole point,' he said. 'It isn't the same time, is it? My TARDIS is at least a twenty-minute walk from here.'

With that, he went towards the cellar steps. 'Are you coming or aren't you?' he called back over his shoulder.

Peri shrugged and followed him. She usually did.

Nobody ever discovered quite what had happened at the hacienda of the Doña Arana. Because Father Ignatius had suffered a slight stroke it was many weeks before he felt well enough to visit her again. He called the police when he found the condition the house was in and they carried out a desultory investigation over several more weeks. It was obvious that there had been an explosion – the foundations of the hacienda had been shattered and much of the building had subsided into the cellars, completely blocking them – but quite what had caused it and what had happened to the Doña were mysteries that were never solved.

The file eventually went into a cabinet next to one on the unsolved murder of Botcherby, Oscar, restaurant manager.

Meanwhile, the Doctor and Peri...

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